

School of Theology at Claremont



1001 1327568



The Library
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
AT CLAREMONT

WEST FOOTHILL AT COLLEGE AVENUE
CLAREMONT, CALIFORNIA

HEAR MY PRAYER

A BOOK TO HELP YOU PRAY

Uniform with this Volume

BY THE GRACE OF GOD

A BOOK OF CHANGED LIVES

"The net effect of this book is to convince the reader, whatever may be his theological bias, that Grace is as real a thing as the sun-rising, 'explain it how you will.' This is indeed a victorious book."—*Christian World*.

"Christian preachers and teachers, not to mention the ordinary reader, can set on one side most of their volumes on Christian evidence, and in place of them put this one book. The world can have no answer to this volume of fact and wonder. If Christianity is, as we maintain, not so much a creed to be believed, as a life to be lived, see it here in operation."—*Record*.

HODDER AND STOUGHTON

HEAR MY PRAYER

A BOOK TO HELP YOU PRAY

BV
215
C56

“The act of praying is the very highest energy of which the human mind is capable.”

—SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE.

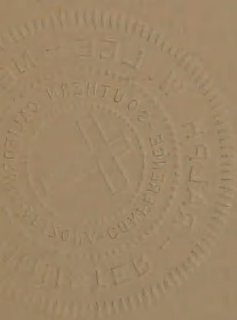
LONDON

HODDER AND STOUGHTON LIMITED

1938

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

THE publishers are much indebted to the Reverend F. E. Christmas, who has prepared and edited this book. They also thank the authors for their ready co-operation when the idea of this book was submitted to them; also the following publishers for their willing permission to use material from books published by them: The Student Christian Movement Press, The China Inland Mission, Messrs. James Clarke & Co., Messrs. Longmans, Green & Co., Messrs. J. M. Dent & Sons, Messrs. Philip Allan & Co., Messrs. Charles Scribner's Sons, Messrs. A. R. Mowbray & Co., and the Editor of *The Methodist Recorder*.



INTRODUCTION

THIS book deals with the most vital of all subjects. If indeed we can enter into conscious communion with the Eternal Spirit by whose love and power creation in its manifold and tremendous glory is sustained; if it be true that God is in any real sense our Father, with an honouring design for the lives of each of His children, which He will make known to them if they will but listen to Him; if it be true, as untold generations of religious men and women have believed, that by prayer we can release spiritual power for the help of others; surely we cannot too earnestly explore, or too carefully prepare ourselves for such high activity. Yet multitudes of people who say they believe in God only pray in times of special fear or crisis; and many who retain prayer as a habit give to it such scant attention, or come to it with such exhausted energy, that they find it formal, dull and tedious.

There are not wanting signs that people are becoming conscious of the impoverishment of life through their neglect of communion with God, and are realizing that Jesus understood our need when He said that "men ought always to pray and not to faint."

This book has been compiled to help those who have abandoned the practice of prayer to rediscover its value, and to help those who have retained prayer as a habit to realize more fully its privileges and power. Its aim has determined the form of the book. It begins with testimonies to what men have discovered through prayer;

passes to difficulties that may be hindering the reader from attaining to a like experience; and then to what may be learnt about preparation and method.

The great classical writers on the subject have not been neglected, but since the book is designed to help a wide class of readers, many of whom may be out of touch with the traditional language of Christian piety, the contributors have for the most part been selected from among the best known writers who can, in the language of our own day, make plain the eternal things of God.

CONTENTS

PAGE

INTRODUCTION	5
------------------------	---

PROLOGUE

THE NATURALNESS OF PRAYER	13
From <i>The Meaning of Prayer</i> by Dr. H. E. Fosdick	

PART ONE

THE ANSWERS THAT COME

CHAPTER ONE

SOME STRIKING INSTANCES

THE RECLAIMED JOURNALIST	22
From <i>Finding Men for Christ</i> by G. F. Dempster	
THE DRAWING OF GOD	35
From <i>Finding Men for Christ</i> by G. F. Dempster	
PRAYER IN A SLUM TENEMENT	48
From <i>God in the Slums</i> by Hugh Redwood	
THE DUTCH ATHEIST	49
From <i>The True Meaning of Life</i> by Sister Eva of Frieden- short	
FEEDING THE TWO THOUSAND	51
From <i>The Path of Prayer</i> by Samuel Chadwick	
THE MAN WHO BELIEVED IN GOD	53
From <i>By Love Compelled</i> by Marshall Broomhall	

CHAPTER TWO

HEALING BY PRAYER

IN A LONDON HOSPITAL	57
From <i>Christ in the Modern Hospital</i> by Philip Inman	
A CASE OF CANCER	65
From <i>Healing in the Name of Jesus</i> by John Maillard	

	PAGE
MANY THAT WERE SICK	69
From <i>Kingdom Come</i> and <i>Practical Prayer</i> by Hugh Redwood	
HOW CAN THESE THINGS BE?	82
By Leslie D. Weatherhead	

CHAPTER THREE

GUIDANCE THROUGH PRAYER

BE STILL AND KNOW	93
From <i>Creative Prayer</i> by Mrs. Herman	
NOT BY MIGHT NOR BY POWER	95
From <i>Finding Men for Christ</i> by G. F. Dempster	
A COVENANT WITH GOD	111
From <i>By Love Compelled</i> by Marshall Broomhall	
IN DIVERS WAYS	112
From <i>Practical Prayer</i> and <i>God in the Shadows</i> by Hugh Redwood	
THE CONSEQUENCE OF NEGLECT	124
From <i>Prayer</i> by Professor O. Hallesby	
THE REMEDY FOR ANXIETY	125
From <i>Seven Words</i> by The Dean of St. Paul's	

CHAPTER FOUR

THE GIFT OF MORAL POWER

THE POWER TO FORGIVE	134
From <i>What I Owe to Christ</i> by C. F. Andrews	
SUCH A MAN AS I	137
From <i>The Springs of Life</i> by Dr. James Reid	
STRAIN AND STRENGTH	139
From <i>The Springs of Life</i> by Dr. James Reid	
DO WE REALLY WANT TO FIND GOD?	142
From <i>How Can I Find God?</i> by Leslie D. Weatherhead	
THE TRANSFORMATION OF DESIRE	149
From <i>Pentecost</i> by Joe Brice	
AN ADEQUATE DYNAMIC	158
From <i>The Christ of the Mount</i> by Dr. Stanley Jones	

CHAPTER FIVE

WHEN THE ANSWER IS NO

DOES GOD UNDERSTAND OUR NEEDS?	178
From <i>Does God Care?</i> by Lindsay Dewar	
ARE OUR PRAYERS SELFISH?	191
From <i>Prayer</i> by Professor O. Hallesby	

CONTENTS

	9 PAGE
WHY CHRIST SAID NO	199
From <i>Floodtide</i> by Dr. George H. Morrison	
THE DANGER OF ANSWERED PRAYER	201
From <i>The Temple in the Heart</i> by Dr. James Reid	
HOW TO FACE OUR DOUBTS	205
From <i>Seven Words</i> by The Dean of St. Paul's	

CHAPTER SIX

THE FRIENDSHIP OF GOD

THE IMPULSE FROM ABOVE	213
From <i>Healing in the Name of Jesus</i> by John Maillard	
OUR GREATEST NEED	214
From <i>Prayer</i> by Professor O. Hallesby	
THE JOY OF THE LORD	216
From <i>What is this Christianity?</i> by The Bishop of Croydon	
THE SOUL'S DESIRE	220
From <i>Imitation of Christ</i> by Thomas à Kempis	
THE ABIDING PRESENCE	221
From <i>The Practice of the Presence of God</i> by Brother Lawrence	
THE TRUE END OF MAN	226
From <i>The Vision of God</i> by Dr. K. E. Kirk	
FROM SELF TO GOD	232
From <i>Creative Prayer</i> by Mrs. Herman	

PART TWO

THE DIFFICULTIES THAT HINDER

INTRODUCTION	245
------------------------	-----

CHAPTER SEVEN

INTELLECTUAL DIFFICULTIES

SOME COMMON PROBLEMS	248
From <i>Prayer</i> by W. E. Sangster	
IF GOD IS GOOD WHY NEED WE ASK AT ALL?	256
From <i>The Temple in the Heart</i> by Dr. James Reid	
THE MYSTERY OF INTERCESSION	259
From <i>Does God Care?</i> by Lindsay Dewar	

	PAGE
HAS SCIENCE MADE PRAYER OBSOLETE?	263
From <i>The Life of Prayer in a World of Science</i> by Dr. William Adams Brown	
THE PREPARATION OF THE MIND	277
From <i>Essays and Addresses on the Philosophy of Religion</i> (second series) by Baron von Hügel	

CHAPTER EIGHT

MORAL DIFFICULTIES

ARE WE SEEKING GOD AS AN ESCAPE FROM MEN?	288
From <i>How Can I Find God?</i> by Leslie D. Weatherhead	
DO WE HARBOUR PREJUDICES?	299
From <i>Seeking and Finding</i> by Dr. G. Macmillan	
DANGEROUS PRAYERS OF DEFEAT AND OBSESSION	304
From <i>Psychology and Religious Experience</i> by Professor Fearon Halliday	

PART THREE

THE ART OF PRAYER

INTRODUCTION	315
------------------------	-----

CHAPTER NINE

WHAT JESUS TAUGHT ABOUT PRAYER

HE SAID TO THEM "WHEN YE PRAY . . ."	317
From <i>Everyman's Life of Jesus</i> by Dr. James Moffatt	
THE PATTERN PRAYER	320
(1) On the Threshold	321
(2) Hallowing the Name	324
(3) The Rule of the Father	327
(4) Doing God's Will	330
(5) Our Daily Bread	334
(6) The Forgiveness of Sins	337
(7) The Forgiving Spirit	340
(8) Out of Temptation	343
(9) Deliverance From Evil	347
From <i>The Temple in the Heart</i> by Dr. James Reid	

CHAPTER TEN

TIMES AND SEASONS

	PAGE
ARE WE PREPARED TO GIVE THE TIME?	351
From <i>The Springs of Life</i> by Dr. James Reid	
THE QUIET HOUR	354
From <i>The True Meaning of Life</i> by Sister Eva of Frieden- short	
AT WHAT PERIOD IN THE DAY?	362
From <i>The Christian Man</i> by Canon Peter Green	
FINDING THE BEST PLACE	367
From <i>Christ in the Silence</i> by C. F. Andrews	

CHAPTER ELEVEN

METHOD IN PRAYER

THE NATURAL ORDER OF THOUGHT	377
From <i>The Profession of a Christian</i> by Canon Peter Green	
ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS IN PRAYER	382
From <i>What is this Christianity?</i> by The Bishop of Croydon	
WANDERING THOUGHTS	397
From <i>The Practice of the Presence of God</i> by Brother Lawrence	
THE ART OF CONCENTRATION	398
From <i>Psychology and Life</i> by Leslie D. Weatherhead	
THE USE OF THE IMAGINATION	399
From <i>He is Able</i> by W. E. Sangster	
PICTURE PRAYING AS TAUGHT BY STUDDERT KENNEDY	405
From <i>When We Pray</i> by Ronald Sinclair	
PRAY AFFIRMATIVELY	411
From <i>Psychology and Life</i> by Leslie D. Weatherhead	
A SUGGESTED SCHEME	413
From <i>The Life of Prayer in a World of Science</i> by Dr. William Adams Brown	
A PLAN FOR THE WEEK	415
From <i>When We Pray</i> by Ronald Sinclair	
PRAY WITHOUT CEASING	421
From <i>The Practice of the Presence of God</i> by Brother Lawrence	

CHAPTER TWELVE

DISCIPLINE IN PRAYER

	PAGE
THE WAY OF STILLNESS	423
From <i>The Religion of Youth</i> by Melville Channing Pearce	
ALL LIFE MUST BE A PREPARATION	429
From <i>Essays and Addresses on the Philosophy of Religion</i> by Baron von Hügel	
THE DARK NIGHT OF THE SOUL	444
From <i>The Art of Mental Prayer</i> by Bede Frost	
WRESTLING IN PRAYER	453
From <i>Lord, Teach Us to Pray</i> by Dr. Alexander Whyte	
PERIODS OF DRYNESS	457
From <i>The Spiritual Guide</i> by Michael de Molinos	
HUMBLE DEPENDENCE	464
From <i>The Spiritual Life</i> by Evelyn Underhill	

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

UNSELFISHNESS IN PRAYER

CONTINUING THE WORK OF CHRIST	470
From <i>Healing in the Name of Jesus</i> by John Maillard	
THE SIGNS OF SELFISHNESS IN PRAYER	474
From <i>When We Pray</i> by Ronald Sinclair	
THE DEMAND AND PRESSURE OF CREATIVE LOVE	481
From <i>The Spiritual Life</i> by Evelyn Underhill	
THE NOBLEST THING IN FRIENDSHIP	484
From <i>Lord, Teach Us to Pray</i> by Dr. Alexander Whyte	
THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS	487
From <i>The Valley and Beyond</i> by Anthony C. Deane and <i>The Gospel of the Hereafter</i> by Dr. J. Paterson Smyth	

EPILOGUE

PRAYER AND LIFE	499
From <i>The Spiritual Life</i> by Evelyn Underhill	

PROLOGUE

THE NATURALNESS OF PRAYER

MANY definitions have been given of prayer, just as many descriptions of God have been attempted. No definition is wholly satisfactory, not because prayer is vague or unreal, but because it is an activity of personal beings, and can therefore function at many different emotional, intellectual and moral levels. A good deal of confusion can be avoided if we remember this simple fact. The cry of a baby for the moon, and the address of Socrates to his judges might both be described as appeals; but it would be absurd to class them together without further distinction, and to say that because the cry of the baby is impotent and irrational, therefore Socrates was wasting his time in making his appeal to the Athenian court. Differences no less vast may be found in prayer—both in men's conception of what prayer is, what it accomplishes, and how it should be exercised.

Before we begin to consider distinction in prayer, however, it is helpful to remind ourselves that prayer is universal. If we neglect it we are neglecting an activity that men in all ages have found as natural as speech, and by which the noblest and best lives have been inspired and sustained. This is set forth by Professor Harry Emerson Fosdick in his book on *The Meaning of Prayer*, from which our opening chapter is taken.

Samuel Johnson once was asked what the strongest argument for prayer was, and he replied, "Sir, there is no

argument for prayer." One need only read Dr. Johnson's own petitions to see that he did not mean by this to declare prayer irrational; he meant to stress the fact that praying is first of all a native tendency. It is a practice like breathing or eating in this respect, that men engage in it because they are human, and *afterward* argue about it as best they can. As Carlyle stated it in a letter to a friend: "Prayer is and remains the native and deepest impulse of the soul of man."

Epictetus was a non-Christian philosopher and yet listen to him: "When thou hast shut thy door and darkened thy room, say not to thyself that thou art alone. God is in thy room." Read now Paul's appreciation of this hunger for God and this sense of His presence which are to be found among all peoples.

"Ye men of Athens in all things I perceive that ye are very religious. For as I passed along, and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, 'To an Unknown God.' What therefore ye worship in ignorance, this I set forth unto you. The God that made the world and all things therein, he, being Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is he served by men's hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he himself giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; and he made of one every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed seasons, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek God, if haply, they might feel after him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us; for in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain even of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring."—Acts xvii. 22-28.

Consider the meaning of the fact that prayer and worship are thus universal; that all peoples do "seek God, if, haply, they might feel after Him and find Him." It is said that an ignorant African woman, after hearing her

first Christian sermon, remarked to her neighbour, "There! I always told you that there ought to be a God like that." Somewhere in every man there is the capacity for worship and prayer, for the apprehension of God and the love of Him. Is not this the distinctive quality of man and the noblest faculty which he possesses?

Remember those times in your experience or observation when either you or someone else has been thrown back by an emergency upon this natural tendency to pray in a crisis. This impulse to pray is exhibited in every one of us—at least occasionally.

The instinctive turning of the heart to a "Power not ourselves" is often felt, not alone in crises of peril, but in the presence of great *responsibility*, for which a man unaided feels inadequate.

Thus Abraham Lincoln said, "I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go; my own wisdom and that of all around me seemed insufficient for the day." Whenever a man faces tasks for which he feels inadequate and upon whose accomplishment much depends, he naturally turns to prayer.

When anyone undertakes to study the meaning and to cultivate the habit of prayer, it is well for him to understand from the beginning that he is dealing with a natural function of his life and not with an artificial addition. Raising palm trees in Greenland would be an unnatural proceeding. They never were intended to grow there, and never can grow there save under stress of artificial forcing. The culture of prayer would be just as strained a procedure, were it not true that the tendency to pray is native to us, that prayer is indigenous in us, that we *do* pray, one way or another, even though fitfully and without effect, and that men always have prayed and always will pray. The definition of man as a "praying animal," while not comprehensive, is certainly correct. *The culture of prayer,*

therefore, is not importing an alien, but is training a native citizen of the soul. Professor William James of Harvard was thinking of this when he wrote: "We hear in these days of scientific enlightenment a great deal of discussion about the efficacy of prayer; and many reasons are given us why we should not pray, whilst others are given us why we should. But in all this very little is said of the reason why we do pray. . . . The reason why we do pray is simply that we cannot help praying."

Our justification for calling prayer natural may be found partly in the *universality* of it. In some form or other, it is found everywhere, in all ages and among all peoples. The most discouraging circumstances do not crush it, and theories of the universe directly antagonistic do not prevent it. Buddhism, a religion theoretically without a God, ought logically to exclude prayer; but in countries where Buddhism is dominant, prayer is present. Confucius, a good deal of an agnostic, urged his disciples not to have much to do with the gods; and to-day Confucius is himself a god and millions pray to him. *Before the tendency to pray all barriers go down.*

The traveller climbs the foothills of the Himalayas, and among the Khonda of North India hears the prayer: "O Lord, we know not what is good for us. Thou knowest what it is. For it we pray." The archæologist goes back among the Aztec ruins and reads their prayer in affliction: "O merciful Lord, let this chastisement with which thou hast visited us, give us freedom from evil and from folly." The historian finds the Greek world typical of all ancient civilizations at least in this, that prayer is everywhere. Xenophon begins each day's march with prayer; Pericles begins every address with prayer; the greatest of Greek orations, Demosthenes' "On the Crown," and the greatest of Greek poems, "The Iliad," are opened with prayer. When from the superstitious habits of the populace one turns to the most elevated and philosophic spirits

to see what they will say, he hears Plato, "Every man of sense before beginning an important work will ask help of the gods." And turning from Plato's preaching to his practice, he reads this beautiful petition, "King Zeus, grant us the good whether we pray for it or not, but evil keep from us, though we pray for it."

If to-day one crosses the borders of Christianity into Mohammedanism, not only will he find formal prayer five times daily, when the muezzin calls, but he will read descriptions of prayer like this from a Sufi—"There are three degrees in prayer. The first is when it is only spoken by the lips. The second is when with difficulty, by a resolute effort, the soul succeeds in fixing its thought on divine things. The third is when the soul finds it hard to turn away from God." And if from all others, one looks to the Hebrew people, with what unanimous ascription do they say, "O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come" (Ps. lxxv. 2). A man is cutting himself off from one of the elemental functions of human life when he denies in himself the tendency to pray.

Moreover, justification for calling prayer natural is found in the fact that *mankind never outgrows prayer*. Both the practice and the theory of it have proved infinitely adaptable to all stages of culture. In its lowest forms, among the most savage peoples, prayer and magic were indistinguishable. To pray then was to use charms that compelled the assent of the gods. And from such pagan beginnings to Jesus alone in the Garden, prayer has proved capable of unlimited development. It has not been crushed but has been lifted into finer forms by spiritual and intellectual advance. It has shaped its course like a river, to the banks of each generation's thought; but it has flowed on, fed from fountains that changing banks do not affect. Nowhere is this more plain than in the Bible. Compare the dying prayer of Samson, as he wound his arms around the sustaining pillars of the Philistine dining-hall and cried:

“O Lord Jehovah, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes” (Judges xvi. 28); with the dying prayer of Stephen as he was being stoned, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge” (Acts vii. 60). Both are prayers, but they come from two ages between which the revelation of God and the meaning of prayer had infinitely widened.

Both in the Scripture and out of it, the quality of prayer is suited to the breadth or narrowness of view, the generosity or bitterness of spirit, which the generation or the individual possess. As Sabatier puts it, “*The history of prayer is the history of religion.*” At one end of the scale,

“In even savage bosoms
There are longings, strivings, yearnings
For the good they comprehend not;
And their feeble hands and helpless,
Groping blindly in the darkness,
Touch God’s right hand in that darkness
And are lifted up and strengthened.”

At the other end of the scale, Coleridge says, “The act of praying is the very highest energy of which the human mind is capable.” The human soul never outgrows prayer. At their lowest, men pray crudely, ignorantly, bitterly; at their best, men pray intelligently, spiritually, magnanimously. *Prayer is not only universal in extent; it is infinite in quality.* A man may well give himself to the deepening and purifying of his prayer, for it is as natural in human life as thought.

PART ONE
THE ANSWERS THAT COME

CHAPTER ONE

SOME STRIKING INSTANCES

NO thoughtful Christian would rest his conviction about prayer upon the contingency of receiving a direct answer to a particular petition. "God," it has well been said, "is no man's daily drudge," and we cannot by prayer impose our will upon God. We know what we want, but that is often far removed from what we need, and as God is our Heavenly Father He will not merely refuse to answer directly our petitions when their fulfilment would prove harmful to us, but He will seek to hinder us from finding the answer in less direct ways. To say this, however, is not to say that "definite" answers must not be expected, or that they have not been received. There is grave danger lest we should first surrender our faith to a materialistic science which denies the freedom of God, because all life is supposed to run by fixed "laws"; and then we should try to find "spiritual" explanations why no direct answer should be received to our prayers, when fundamentally we suffer from unbelief in God. Sir Oliver Lodge once used a simple illustration to suggest how freedom is possible in an orderly universe—that when a cat meows at a closed door, the cry is really its prayer to a higher power to do for it what it cannot do for itself. When its mistress opens the door the prayer is answered. To a cat it might appear "miraculous"; yet no order or "law" has been violated. If our minds were great enough to grasp the whole order of creation, we should doubtless realize that all prayers are answered or refused in a way that is at once perfect in order and perfect in love. We can perhaps grasp something of both when we realize that the witness to specific answers

received to prayer—a witness that is enormous in its range—is strongest concerning those prayers which are offered for others, and which therefore spring spontaneously from a loving heart. We have selected only a few striking cases on the subject, but in this chapter and the next it is with such specific answers that we are concerned.



THE RECLAIMED JOURNALIST

Few men have seen so many remarkable results which could be directly traced to prayer as Rev. G. F. Dempster. Constrained by the love of God, he has gone to seek for men in every degree of depravity to help them to find newness of life; and again and again he has seen prayer achieving what would be declared humanly impossible. These instances appear in his book, Finding Men for Christ.

“When thou wast under the fig tree I saw thee.”

One Sunday evening, in the darkest part of White-chapel—notorious for those Ripper crimes—where every kind of evil abounded—but also where I have found some of God’s gentlemen, we were out searching among the alleys and courts for those whom we desired to get into our service.

Near the Leman Street Railway Station was a horse trough under the shadow of the railway bridge. Men loitered about there in groups, and many an hour has been spent persuading those men that life holds something finer than their present dark experiences.

On this particularly cold, misty evening, there was but one man lounging against the stone horse trough. He looked miserable and surly. He made no response whatever to my invitations. “Good evening, friend,” repeated

several times in as cheery a manner as possible had brought only a slight uplifting of the eyebrows but no word.

"Can I help you?" was followed by perfect silence with no further indication of intelligence. He was not asleep for his eyes were wide open, and he was staring steadily at the granite setts at his feet. Several other expressions of desire to be of some aid were patiently tried but were similarly received with absolute indifference. He evidently intended to ignore me with contempt—or was deaf and dumb. He did not appear to be a foreigner, but seemed to be just a decently built, though very shabbily dressed man of about forty years of age. "Come, old friend, you want a pal, and here's one who wants to do something to cheer and help. Won't you let me? Come along with me to our service. You'll find other friends there, too, and maybe you'll find the greatest Friend of all—the Lord Christ who knows all about you and wants you."

At that he suddenly looked up, curled his lip sneeringly, and I thought was about to speak. No words came, however, he restrained his utterance and again hung his head.

I tried again unavailingly and had to leave him thus with just this sentence, "He loves you and wants to find you."

At the close of the service that night one of the workers brought me a message that a man was waiting in the lobby to see me. He was my friend from the horse trough.

"Thank God I came here to-night," he said quietly, "let me come and speak with you. How different it might have been."

He followed me to a quiet room and without any preparatory phrases began.

"Last night, Saturday, at this time I was walking along the riverside by the Tower and had decided that it was useless for me to live any longer. I had made a sorry mess of my life and had entailed misery to others by my con-

duct. I had forfeited the confidence and affection of all who knew me, and no one now cares what becomes of me. I should not be missed. No employer wanted me. I only added one to the crowd of unemployed. I grew more and more bitter as I reflected. I waited until there was no other person in sight and then clambered upon the wall to drop over into the water, when something reminded me that to-morrow was Sunday. In a flash came thoughts of Church—hymns—worship—Sunday School—God—these surged through my mind. I paused. Suppose I wait for just one more Sunday. It was years since I had entered a church. I had grown callous and wretched, indifferent to any feeling of religious desire. If there were a God surely He would have made a difference. He would have stretched out a hand to help me. Perhaps—perhaps that is what He now is doing—why I have hesitated and paused. I decided to wait. Suppose things were really going to be different if I went to church and made my confession. I was a ‘miserable offender’ right enough. Suppose one more effort could be made to go straight, to recover a bit of self-respect—to earn a living decently—to perhaps—then came a dream of more precious things. I wondered where my friends—did they care? Would they forgive? Suppose all could be put right again. Suppose this were God’s voice offering me another chance. I’ll take it. God help me! I prayed. Yes, I’ll wait another Sunday and see.

“I don’t know whether I climbed down or fell down from the wall. I was in a sort of ecstasy at the thought of possibilities. I prayed again. I sat where I was for a long time dreaming of all that might happen. Then I dozed.

“It was becoming daylight when I was awakened by a voice and by someone touching me with his foot. ‘Now, mate, you must get out of this.’

“The inevitable policeman. But he seemed a bit kinder than folk had been lately.

“ ‘Get a move on; you look cold, chum. Got anywhere to go?’ ”

“I remembered it was now Sunday morning and I had resolved to go to church, but did not tell the policeman that.

“ ‘Got anything to eat?’ ”

“I could truthfully answer that question, ‘No,’ at which that policeman gave me threepence to get something.

“Was this the first sign that the tide had turned? I believed it was. I resolved after all to tell the policeman of my resolve. He listened sympathetically, and reminded me of two or three churches near by. ‘Pray for me too, mate, I need praying for. I’m no angel, but duty is duty and I had to move you on now it’s daylight. Passed you twice while it was dark. Better luck, mate.’ And he left me to go my way. I wandered around until the time came for churches to open. I knew one where I intended to go. Made up my mind what I should say in my prayers. Found the place open, and turned to go in. As I entered the porch there were two men standing there. One of them stared at me as I passed and then quickly followed me. Just as I was opening the inside door he said, touching me on the arm kindly enough: ‘Where are you going?’ ”

“ ‘Inside,’ I answered as I paused.

“Quite kindly he then said: ‘But—we are rather select here,’ glancing as he spoke at my clothing and unwashed face.

“I turned at once and cursed him—cursed churches—cursed religion and nearly cursed God—and came away deciding that I had been fooled by my feelings.

“ ‘Select? Yes, select enough for hell,’ I called out at him as I descended the steps.

“My own words frightened me. ‘Hell?’ Was there such a place? Yes! Indeed there was and I was already

in it. Had been for many months. There couldn't be anything worse than I had known. I'd wait for night again and then end it. I was sitting on that horse trough just waiting for night to come.

"Then your band came along. I cursed them for the noise they made. Pitied them for their ignorant childishness. 'Marching to Zion' they were playing. Fools; there is no such place.

"Then you came along. I had it in my heart to say vile things to you. If I had opened my lips you'd have been shocked. But as you spoke I found no words would come. If I had possessed a knife or a weapon of any sort I could have killed you, but I could not speak. The very devil was inside, but some power greater than his sealed my tongue. How glad I am I could not answer you.

"You called me friend, but I judged you as just one more hypocritical professional who had to say things like that to folk like me. Yet—there was something in the way you spoke that made me look at you again.

"After you had gone, I also left that spot and was making towards the river. I wanted to run, but just as my voice would not come when I wanted to rave at you, so my legs refused to run. I felt dizzy and had to grab the iron railing I was passing to save myself from falling. I saw another constable coming my way. I recalled my friend of the morning. Everybody was not wrong. There is some good in the world. Suppose you were different. Suppose you had a message from God. I began to desire to come here, and gradually turned my steps this way. I came in with the crowd and nobody noticed me. Then you announced the hymn, 'Tell me the old old story.' I was handed a book, but although I knew every word of that hymn I couldn't sing a note until we came to the words, 'Remember I'm the sinner whom Jesus came to save.' That was me. I prayed again. Then, without knowing one word of my history, you told the folk all

about me. How could you have known the experiences I had had during the last few hours, yet you described them, and when you asked for those who were wanting Christ to meet them and forgive them, I said, 'I do,' and here I am to tell you so. Thank God I came here to-night."

I saw before me the same man as I had seen sitting out there on the horse trough, but he was different. Gone were the surly, miserable glances, and in their place a look of eager intent. He had been "born again." He was a new creation. His bearing, voice, manner were all changed, and he joined me in a prayer of thanksgiving.

The next day I learned something more of his story. He had been a journalist. For some years he had been abroad in a country where he had met all sorts and conditions of his fellow-countrymen, mostly those who had left England "for England's good" as it is often said. While he kept in touch with his family and retained his early ideals all went fairly well. He intended one day to return to his parents and the lady he had promised to make his wife. But the allurements and fascinations of the circle of so-called friends into whose company he had fallen soon caused difficulties. He found himself becoming addicted to drink. At home he had never been known to exceed the mere beverage stage. All his friends at home were the same. The restraints of the home circle were such that none of them ever thought of intoxicants as such. But away from all such safeguards (so he described the position) he soon yielded to invitations to places where there was no limit to the drinking, and he with the rest were often intoxicated. This he did for a time, but his decline was a rapid one. His letters home became less frequent. The very inclination to write to his sweetheart began to wane, and then, after reading a letter from home in which he was chided for neglecting his duty, he angrily decided not to bother them again. Time passed rapidly. He lost his regular employment and

took to free lance work which for a short period seemed to succeed. But his quality declined with his moral lapse and he became an outsider. Then the news reached him of the death of his mother, and within a very short time of his father. He gave way entirely to drink and went down, down, until after several disgraceful episodes, he turned to the sea as a place of refuge. He managed to obtain a steward's berth on a ship which became short-handed through sickness among the crew and sailed away to a still more distant land—New Zealand. Again through drinking he missed this ship, finding one morning when he awoke from a drunken sleep that the vessel had departed from port several hours without him. Stranded, he wandered from place to place, trying to forget his past. He worked when he could get it at any odd job. Starved when no work was found. Often tempted to steal, and having now no moral scruples, often yielded and managed to evade the consequences. Lounging about the quayside in Wellington one day, he heard a ship's officer asking another man if he were a ship's steward and wanted a job. The reply was in the negative, so here was a chance and up he sprang and offered his services. He had no discharge book or references of any sort, but apparently the officer badly wanted a hand, and after a few preliminary questions were more or less satisfactorily answered he was engaged, taken to a shipping office and signed on the ship's crew list. Homeward bound to London, he was discharged there, and for a few weeks managed to exist upon the small amount he had earned. He had met on board among the passengers a man who professed to be able to befriend him when the ship should arrive in the home port, and in due time visited the address given him. He was offered a job and had accepted it. The terms seemed so lucrative that he was beguiled by them, only to find that he was "aiding and abetting" in a most illegal business. One day he was met by a detective, whose ques-

tioning so alarmed him that he decided to quit without warning. He gave way again to the drink and to such an extent that his nerves completely gave out. He was picked up in the street, taken to a hospital where after a long struggle the treatment restored some measure of strength; but his moral fibre had gone. He was the subject of extreme melancholy and dejection. He had nothing left to aim at and nothing to hope for—so he would end it.

It was then that in the merciful planning of God he was “found” and by Grace restored. In a few weeks he had so completely recovered that it was possible to introduce him to the editor of a colonial paper concerned with the country with which he was already familiar. He was engaged and rapidly gained favour, meanwhile doing good service to the Church which had received him when he was not “very select.”

He had now a very different conception of Christ's disciples among whom he described himself in Paul's language as the “least of all the saints.” He gave evidence that there was no service within his power too arduous or too exacting for him to undertake. On many occasions he volunteered for night duty, either in company with the writer or to watch alone by a sick man's bedside as a relief nurse. It was on one of the latter occasions that he made a discovery which ultimately led him back to the colony where he had spent so many years of his life—where his parents had died, and where—he now learned—that the woman he had courted and won was still living, and possibly praying for his return.

One of our members was the wife of a seafarer who had been taken ashore sick to a hospital abroad, and upon recovering sufficiently had been sent home for further treatment. Unfortunately for the family, he did not at first respond to the attention of the doctor who undertook the case. He became worse, and at one time it was feared that he would not recover. There came a crisis and the

tide turned in his favour, but a long and tedious period of nursing followed, during which his relatives were worn out by the days and nights of anxiety. B—— heard about this and volunteered to take duty two nights in each week, and so gave the wife and others a respite. After he had done so the first week he confided to me that he did not think the patient was a converted man. Apparently certain conversations had taken place during which B—— had formed his own conclusions as to the spiritual state of the sick man.

Owing to the man's frequent and lengthy absences from home I had never had much opportunity to become acquainted with him. He knew that his wife and two daughters were regular adherents at Church, and did not interfere with their attendance. But whenever it had been attempted to get him to come along there were always excuses proffered. I had, however, seen him several times, and had discussed him with his wife. She had always described him as a good husband and father, but I had thought there was some diffidence whenever the question of his actual spiritual condition had been mentioned. Since his return home I had seen him frequently, but his illness had rendered it difficult to have prolonged conversations. Whenever I had suggested prayer he had agreed readily, and had thanked me for coming to see him.

Now that B—— was in closer attendance for longer periods, it was evident that discoveries had been made which B—— was anxious to discuss with me, neither of us guessing in the least the far-reaching issues.

"He is troubled about his soul as well as his body," B—— declared one day.

"How did you discover that?" I asked, for it was a delight to me to discover that this newly found disciple was already so keen upon finding others.

"Well, he asked me how I became a Christian, so I

told him a part of my story. He is more than interested. There is some part of what I have already told him which seems to cause him special concern. You see, in his present state I quite understand that one must not talk too long at one time, nor allow him to fatigue himself with talking. But he always asks me to 'go on,' and seems to want to know a lot about whether God really hears and answers prayers. There is something behind that, I am certain. What do you think? "

I thought so too, and suggested a few possibilities, one of which was that probably someone, either his wife or another, had at some time spoken with him about praying for him.

"Do you think he means his own prayers for himself or the prayers of others for him?" I asked.

"I have a notion it's the latter, because once when I had asked him whether I should there and then pray for him, he hinted that others were doing the same."

"Has he spoken of any special experience when he was in hospital abroad? Possibly the padre there was specially interested."

"Not exactly that, but I gathered there was something he wants explained about the matter of prayer, and I promised I would ask you about it. Could you call some time and help him on the matter?"

"Certainly I will. Are you due round there this evening?"

"Yes, I am for duty to-night, and shall be there at eight o'clock."

"Then I'll come along with you." So it was arranged.

When we called along to the "Building" that evening we were met by the wife, who looked greatly cheered, telling us that he had had a much better day. The doctor had been in and was delighted with the patient's progress. The latter was very anxious to see his "night nurse."

The improvement was very marked, and so it hap-

pened that conditions were favourable for a conversation such as we both desired.

After the usual greetings I suggested that since it was not possible for the patient to come to church, we might have a brief service "on our own."

The patient seemed pleased with the proposal. I therefore asked B—— to read a few verses from the Psalms. He read Psalm ciii. to verse 10, and as he read that verse his voice trembled so that we could not but observe it. The patient, whose eyes had been closed, now looked up, and raising his hand he said softly, "Stop! That is true, every word is true, but read the first part again.

"Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me
bless His holy name.

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His
benefits;

Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy
diseases;

Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who
crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender
mercies."

He again held up his hand to stop the reading.

"That is what she read to me," he said.

"Who?" I asked.

"The Sister in hospital. She gave me a little book all about it. It's in that drawer. Will you please get it for me?"

B—— opened the drawer and found the book indicated. It was a small leather-covered volume entitled *Does God Answer Prayer?* He handed it slowly to the sick man, who opened it, and turning to the front fly-leaf, held it out for our inspection. I took it from him and read in a clear handwriting:

"Hoping you will live to prove every word of that psalm to be true, your friend H—— S——," and a date.

I passed the book to B——.

He held it, staring hard first at it and then at each of us. His face was pallid. I thought he was about to faint, but he swiftly recovered and turned quietly to me, saying, "Pray with us, and specially for me." I took the book from him quickly, and we both went to our knees. The sick man had not apparently observed anything wrong, but as I asked for God's blessing upon His Word, upon the patient, the doctor, the family and ourselves, I heard muffled groans from B—— and a deep-throated, reverent "Amen." Not knowing the meaning of the incident, I quickly bade the sick man "good night," and prepared to depart alone. But B—— said a few words to the man in the bed, and then calling the wife to the door, explained that he was afraid he would have to go back with me for an hour. Would she mind if he did not return until about ten o'clock? We therefore left together.

I was about to ask him what was wrong when he anticipated me by saying, "The lady who wrote that in the book was my sweetheart of years ago, and I regard this incident as a message to myself. The book itself is a copy of one I gave her long since, in which I wrote a similar phrase but with a very different implication. Mine was written in sarcasm, I fear, for although I knew her to be a devout believer, I was really a sceptic. Now I too know that I have lived 'to prove every word of that psalm true.' It seems to me almost like a message from Heaven itself."

"As indeed it really is," I responded.

We conversed for an hour before B—— went to his voluntary night watching, and during that brief space much was planned.

On the morrow a letter was directed to a certain colonial city hospital, and at the same time there was also dispatched a cablegram, unknown to B—— at the time. It ran thus:

"God does answer prayer. Letter posted. Coming.
"B——."

The hopeless outcast from the horse trough, the depraved one who was too far gone to be welcomed at a "select" church, returned to his friends in that far-away land, taking with him the proof positive that "when he was a great way off his Father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck and kissed him. . . . For this my Son was lost and is found."

There were great rejoicings in that place. The love and prayers of a patient, believing woman were rewarded, and since then others by the score have heard the glad sound of a Saviour who is still seeking such as shall be saved. Up country, too, there are dusky brethren who know not only the meaning of emancipation from physical slavery, but also the "liberty which belongeth to the children of God." For B—— and his devoted wife have consecrated themselves to a life of service for such coloured folk. The full harvest is not yet. The Morning will reveal the completed plan, and what part was played in it by those things which happened East of Aldgate that Sunday evening when our people sallied forth in much weakness to "find men for Christ."

It seems to me that in these days of achievement in the realm of science the Church of Jesus should be better able to comprehend the meaning both of the written Word of God and the signs of the times. Every new discovery of the wonders of the universe in which we live could prove a factor for the Hastening of His Kingdom on earth if only we would put it to right uses. Unhappily, no sooner does He permit us to discover some fresh secret of nature than we at once begin to exploit it, not only for the mere monetary value, but generally to such base uses as convert it from a blessing to an additional hindrance. We do not "render unto God the things which are God's."

The morning I stepped into the Post Office to dispatch my message of gladness, I had to stand and wait while

the same wonderful machinery was being used by a crowd of gambling tipsters and others whose only purpose was outwitting one another for selfish ends.

The discovery of a means of conveying without wires messages and even pictures, is already being exploited by clever and unscrupulous people to the basest of purposes. The power to rise above the earth and travel through the air already constitutes the most terrible means of destroying men, women and children by incredibly cruel methods.

Yet God has still the next word. His ways are higher than our ways. He is always "before" us. We cannot exhaust either His power or His Wisdom. Prayer is still more potent than any power of man or devil.

*

THE DRAWING OF GOD

There is a famous spot on the eastern edge of the City of London where it adjoins Whitechapel and Stepney Borough. There stands the Tower of London as it has stood through centuries of English history. What astounding and thrilling scenes those grey buildings and the surrounding moat have witnessed! The spot is still the scene of remarkable happenings. Tower Hill is a centre where crowds of men gather to listen to orators of all kinds. At certain hours of the day the great city offices in the adjacent Eastcheap, Thames Street, Trinity Square, Mincing Lane and the like disgorge the workers old and young, and it is an opportunity for the propagandist to proclaim his views. So it became a rallying ground for exponents of every possible ism, and we also took advantage of the natural pulpit formed by an elevated roadway and a stout brick wall to preach Christ there.

Naturally the type of audience drawn depends upon the kind of speaker to a large extent. An intelligent hearing is generally accorded to a man with a message and

I have joyous memories of many finds in this area.

One day as I was passing this spot homeward bound I saw the usual crowds of men who congregate there at mid-day. There were several groups listening to the various speakers. One group was particularly large and was evidently greatly interested in one who was holding forth from a van which served as platform. It was apparently a properly organized political meeting, with chairman and supporters also sitting in the cart. As I drew nearer I recognized the orator as a well-known leader whose name was a power among the working classes, and whose voice was quite equal to reaching the utmost limits of his audience above the din. He was holding them by a violent denunciation of existing forces of government, law, and order, but at the moment of my arrival he was inflaming the minds of his hearers by ridiculing the Church, religion, the Bible, parsons, and particularly the latter. He had a string of hard names for all preachers of the Christian gospel. These he frequently called "parasites."

This word was part of his stock-in-trade and seemed very acceptable to many in the crowd. On the outskirts of the assembly just by where I had taken my place there stood a tall form which I recognized as that of a friendly police-inspector—a godly man, whose influence in the district was very great. He was so intently listening to the bitter gibes of the orator that he did not observe my approach. What I heard led me to say quietly to him:

"What do you think of that, inspector?"

Looking down at me at once, for he knew my voice, he smiled grimly without replying. Meanwhile the hot-headed man in the cart, seeing that his style of vituperation was finding acceptance with the majority of his hearers, became even more vicious in his condemnation of everything religious.

"I must challenge that," I said. "He must not get away with that."

He swiftly seized my arm in a preventive gesture, but I was determined to make an attempt to present another aspect of the case to that vast audience of men.

"I'll be careful, inspector; I know the chairman. Let me have a word with him first."

"There must be no interruption," he warned me. But there was a merry twinkle in his eye which said more to me than any words.

I made my way quietly but swiftly to the back of the cart where sat a certain local councillor acting as chairman.

I pulled his coat, and as he stooped with a smile of recognition, I said to him: "Let me have a word, Tommy?" I was familiar enough with him to address him in that way.

"What about?" he queried, looking very surprised.

"Same subject," I replied. "Only two minutes on the same subject. May I follow up the speaker's remarks?"

"No arguments, mind," said he.

"No—there'll be no argument; I want to follow up what he has said."

"Right-o! just two minutes then," he agreed.

Presently, amid a roar of applause, the popular orator finished his peroration with a wonderful climax in which he thundered out one final sarcastic charge and indictment against all and sundry religionists.

When the noise had subsided the squeaky, weak voice of Mr. Councillor Tommy — announced that before they dispersed there was another speaker who wished to "say a few words on the same subject."

Some of the men who had begun to move away when the "big gun" had finished now drew in again as they saw who it was presuming to follow.

"Men," I began, "our good friend has delivered a wonderful address and I only wish to cross the t's and dot the i's, and in a couple of minutes to ask you a few plain questions."

Now I was looking into the faces of that big crowd I saw many who would know me and I felt sure of at least a sympathetic hearing, even if others might make it uncomfortable for me afterwards.

"If I could clear away yonder high building," here I pointed eastward toward the Docks, "and the masts and funnels of the ships beyond the buildings, I should reveal an old house in which there lives a man who has been known to sleep in his clothing for a fortnight on end, and to go without his own food that he might be of help to you, your sick wife or ailing children in the time of your need. Who is he?"

A hundred voices yelled at once, "Father Wainwright!"

"Right," said I, as others in the crowd catching the idea joined in the chorus.

"And if we took a walk up yonder and visited a certain tenement where lives a woman who works night and day to do you good, visits your homes, arranges for your wife's convalescence, sends your children away into the country for a holiday and has often redeemed your goods from pawn and paid your rent when you had no money to do so, who should we find?"

"Miss Mary Hughes!" yelled another section of the gathering.

"Right again!"

"And if"—I hurriedly sketched several heroic servants of God whose lives were being devoted unselfishly to the needs of the people, and every time the men rightly named them.

"Now," said I, and I could tell that the great crowd had already guessed my purpose, "is there any good in religion, in the churches, in Christians, in the Bible?"

A mighty roar and clapping of hands followed as I left the cart, only giving myself time for a glance at the previous speaker, whose face was a study. If looks could kill I had been slain. But I thanked the chairman who

had given me the opportunity. He was a thoroughly decent man, highly respected for his whole-hearted loyalty to his ideals, and living very near to the Kingdom, though making no profession of Christianity at that time. How he was later won for the Master is another story. He little knew that day that he had made a very big contribution to the finding of two men, father and son, whose lives were to be changed from the day of that remarkable incident. As I passed on to accompany my friend the police-inspector, I could see that he was thoroughly enjoying the experience.

We walked away together, he remarking, "Splendid, sir. I admire your spirit and you've done some good to-day." He did not then know how true his words were, but he was to know later and rejoice with me.

We had not gone far when a man, hastening after us, came alongside and said:

"Will you excuse me, sir; I would like to speak with you, if you could give me a few minutes in private."

I bade the inspector adieu and lingered to hear what he would say.

"I am an atheist, and have given many lectures on the subject, but to-day I've had an experience which has made me think furiously. Would you mind telling me exactly why you took the unusual steps you did just now? I've a special reason for asking and a great deal depends upon your reply."

I looked carefully at this man before replying to his question. He was in earnest, there seemed to be no indication of any unfriendly or critical attitude. I decided therefore to be outspoken and to tell him exactly.

"Yes! I'll tell you, friend. I am seeking to find men who are lost, or who have gone astray. To-day when I heard that gentleman speaking so untruthfully to men who need above everything to be told the truth if they are ever to get to know God, I felt I must seek to correct the

misleading, and I hope it was done."

"Then you really believe that there is a God who knows us and cares what becomes of us?"

I watched him for a few seconds again to assure myself that he was serious. So many people I meet pretend to be uncertain as to God's existence. I say pretend, for a brief conversation soon reveals the shallowness of their pretence. My answer to this man was therefore a brief sentence: "I know there is."

He was gazing very intently at me as if to search my spirit. He was not an average person. There was an extraordinarily intelligent face with a pair of piercing dark eyes, broad forehead, and deep upper lip. He was above medium height, and apparently strong and well built, but shabbily dressed. I liked him. There was some special reason for this denial of God which he called atheism. He was really troubled by a feeling that he had been a hypocrite as much as any of those whom he had often charged with that iniquity. These things I gathered during the brief space we were looking into each other's face.

"I believe you," he said quietly and slowly, then went on, "and I have a feeling that you can help me in a very important matter. I would like to confide in you if I may. May I walk with you and talk as we go? It will take some time, I am afraid. Can you spare the time?"

I had not yet had my midday meal, so suggested that we might adjourn to a nearby restaurant. He assented with some diffidence which rather puzzled me.

"I cannot easily assent because I have no means of offering to pay, but I will accept a cup of coffee if you will invite me to do so."

That explained the situation and we were presently each enjoying a good meal. Both of us were hungry, so I suggested eating first and talking later. Thus it was, and I heard from him a story of a tragic failure. He had been a practising solicitor and had held excellent positions in

life, was a husband and a father, living apart from his family. The fault all his own. His only son was at college, maintained there by the mother, whose family had received her when the husband had behaved so badly that living with him was impossible. He had not seen them for several years and had decided never to see them again. It did not matter. They were not suffering because of him, for they had plenty of money. Since there was no God, no hereafter, no judgment—so he had told himself—it did not really matter. He no longer loved them nor did they love him. What is love, anyway? Only an imaginary thing developed by a religious training. It was all a delusion. Everybody was selfish—rightly so. For if you did not look after yourself, no one else would. Such was the awful state of mind to which he had been brought by sin.

He had met many professors of religion “of all kinds and of all grades” so he described them—and then proceeded further to tell me his opinions of them. “At least,” he said, “I had made myself believe that these people were all deluded and hypocritical. But to-day you awoke a new train of thought as you took that man to task. I watched him as you were speaking to us and saw how bitterly he resented your appearance and your words. I contrasted you two men and asked myself which represented those things which, in our sanest moments, we all desire. I saw that the other man had stirred up in all of us bitterness, hatred, envy, resentment, self-interest, uncharitableness and strife. A little longer of his incitement and hundreds of those men would be ready for desperate measures. He had worked upon their baser instincts. Then your unexpected appearance, manner and words changed the whole thing. I think”—and he spoke very deliberately—“I think I saw what you mean by God. I am far from a sentimentalist. I have schooled myself against anything like that, yet I felt as you described those people whom the

crowd recognized that it was not you alone who were speaking. The voice was directed to me individually. I was being challenged. You did not know all that I have been reciting to credulous crowds for years, but if you had known you could not have devised a more absolutely complete reply.

"I am now feeling certain that in some way I have been wrong. My thinking has been along wrong lines. I commenced in the wrong place. I was not really sincere. It was a selfish pleasure to me to be able to convince others whom I now see were really striving to convince others of God's reality. Those men believed you when you proved that religion of the kind you described was the real thing. It is so and I want that kind of religion. If I had possessed it my life would not be in the mess it is, and more"—here he shut his eyes and was silent for a space while I waited to hear what he meant to say—"if I had been like those folk my boy would not be the cold-hearted materialist he is."

"Is he really like that?" I asked. "Surely he's quite young and has other qualities which may develop."

"Yes! they may—worse ones still—that's my anxiety. I taught him that there's no God, no Heaven, no Hell, no truth, that all men are selfish and cruel even if seemingly cultured. I've poisoned my boy's mind and now I'm feeling condemned. What can I do?"

By a patient questioning it was discovered that my friend's actual knowledge of the vast subject upon which he had posed as a "lecturer" consisted mostly of the old stock-in-trade queries usually shouted at open-air preachers to win the laughter and scorn of the unthinking crowd, and some odd reading from the writings of such authors as Voltaire, Kant, Haeckel, Foote, and the like. He admitted readily enough that his attitude had been a very insincere one and that he had often argued contrary to his conscience. Asked what he understood by the term "con-

science," he was quite at a loss to adequately express a definition, but he supposed such consciousness must be attributed to early impressions gained from people who had framed a set of rules for living. He apologetically begged me to regard him as honestly trying to explain his position. I thought I understood. He was not the only man I had met whom the devil had deceived and led astray. It was clear to me that as a result of his own folly and misdeeds he had become a victim to a common delusion. But now he was mercifully being offered another opportunity to retrace his steps back to the days before he was soured and embittered. His heart was softening under Divine influences and it was the opening of a door of opportunity to a human agent.

"But my boy," he continued, "it is he concerning whom I am anxious, for it is my example and teaching which have made him a selfish individualist, caring only for his own interest and welfare. He has turned against me, but I deserve that. He has turned against his mother and she does not deserve it. If there are any good women, she is one. Her patience with me and with the boy have been wonderful, and I'm now beginning to see what has helped her. I hope it's not too late. What do you think about it?"

"Your boy can be saved only by the same means," I replied. "And if all you say is true he will be."

"What do you mean?" he asked eagerly.

"I mean that the same God who is now leading you to Himself is in all probability doing the same for your boy."

"Do you really believe that what is happening here to-day with me is the drawing of God?"

"Friend," I replied, "you know it is. Come, be real, own up; you came to speak to me at the suggestion of the Good Spirit whom I call God. You hesitate to speak as plainly as that, but if you are really the honest man you want me to believe you to be you will here and now own

up and be frank enough to admit that God is speaking to you."

He was greatly agitated.

"If I was sure He'd save my boy as well, I'd do anything He wants."

"Then you can be sure," I replied. "Listen! I'll tell you a story."

I was called out one night to take a preaching service at a church a mile from my home in the place of another who was ill. The night was one of the dirtiest imaginable. Rain was falling in torrents and the long walk in such weather was anything but inviting. My way lay across open ground where there was no shelter from the wind and deluge. By the time I reached the building, although I had a waterproof cape-coat, I was pretty well drenched and confess feeling very uncertain as to what would happen. Would anyone venture to a religious service on such a night? There was every excuse for non-attendance.

The only person in the building was the wife of the church-keeper who lived in the adjacent house. She had prepared the church for worship, it was lighted and warmed, but empty. We chatted a few minutes, then I went to the vestry and waited. Presently the swing front door was pushed open and there entered an old lady and a young girl. Both of them were very wet, although I learned that they did not live very far away. I went out to speak to them a few words of welcome and expressed the idea that I thought them very brave to attend in such weather. The old lady smiled pleasantly and said something about "Waiting upon God," and I returned to the vestry for a further few minutes. Then I decided that as there were four of us, I would conduct a brief service of devotion for the benefit of the other three, if not exactly for myself. I played the harmonium, we sang (almost a solo), I led in prayer. We sang again and then I read a

lesson, following it with a brief few words which seemed to greatly interest my listeners. Certainly both the old lady and the girl kept their eyes fixed upon me during my speech. I closed with a blessing, shook hands with the "congregation" and prepared to go home.

"Who was the dear old lady?" I asked the church-keeper's wife as I was departing.

She looked at me somewhat aghast, as if lost for words.

"I hardly like to tell you; but the fact is—she is stone deaf."

It seemed impossible. The old soul had smiled so pleasantly and had spoken so correctly in response to my remarks. I could hardly believe the statement.

"It is true, sir; she hasn't heard a word of your address. Although, if I may say so, I do admire you for taking the service as you did. It has helped me."

I went my long wet walk homeward, deeply pondering the several aspects of that evening, mostly conscious that I had anyhow discharged my duty and must leave the rest to One who knew more about it than I did.

I also reflected upon the fact that chapel-keepers need to be fed spiritually as well as the congregations who engage them, and prayed that my message might be a blessing at least to the one woman, and the little girl.

For some time subsequently the remembrance of that evening was a source of almost merriment to me as I thought of my "stone-deaf hearer."

Some months later I was planned to preach again at that church, and naturally, on arrival, I asked the good caretaker if the "deaf old lady" would be there. Had she been seen since?

"Indeed she has, sir, but haven't you heard about her? She'll be here to-night."

"No! Not a word. What has happened?" I asked.

"Well, I must tell you that the child with her that night was her granddaughter. Her eldest son's child.

Living with her granny because drink had broken up the home and sent the mother into the infirmary along the road. Where the child's father was none knew at that time. But God did. Well, it appears that when they reached home the old lady made the child take her slate and pencil, and write down 'all she could remember of what that gentleman had said.' "

The child did so and the granny read it out aloud.

"Dearie, do you know that I've never given my heart to the Lord Jesus? Oh, what a lot of sorrow I might have prevented if I had done so when I was your age. I'm going to do so now. Kneel down here with me and I'll do it now." She prayed for forgiveness and told God she would henceforth be His disciple.

Then she persuaded the child to do the same while they were kneeling together.

"Now then, dearie, there's your father and your two uncles. We will pray for them as well."

All three of her sons had been reckless and wicked. One had gone abroad as a sailor, had deserted his ship and had not been heard of for several years.

That night they were the subject of a mother's heartfelt petition which was heard and marvellously answered.

During the intervening period between my two visits there had been a special Mission held in a large church near by, and one of the first to become converted was the child's father who had since become a remarkably changed person whom I was to know intimately later. Then the old lady received a letter telling her that her second son had come under the influence of a godly minister and his wife and was a sound Christian.

A week before my second visit another letter had come from Canada enclosing a leaflet announcing the fact that her third son was to preach in a Methodist church. He had been converted in Montreal and was already coming "on the plan" as a "preacher on trial."

The old lady and her grandchild were at my service, and with them the child's father.

In the vestry afterwards we held a real love feast. Many sheets of paper filled with my scribbled congratulations, questions, thanksgivings and counsels were left on that vestry table and the old lady's face was glorious to behold as she told me of how God had answered her prayers.

I had the joy of meeting all three of those men and rejoiced in the fact that they all became preachers for Christ.

My friend sat silently listening as I related this story. Then he said: "May we walk again and talk it out?"

We did, and somewhere near that stone boulder at the top of Nightingale Lane this man made the great decision, not knowing in the least that at that same moment another "miracle" was being wrought in a student's room at Cambridge.

A few days later the news of this was brought in a letter from the son, first asking his father's pardon for his hardness of heart and his selfishness, telling of his own decision for Christ, and begging his father to consider the matter of God's claims "before it may be too late."

"Will you write and tell him for me?" the father pleaded after I had read the letter.

"Yes! gladly, upon one condition," I replied.

"And that is?"

"That you send a letter with mine."

Those letters were sent and a little later I had the privilege of witnessing in my own room a meeting of reconciliation I shall never forget. My loud-voiced orator of Tower Hill would find it very hard to believe that the devoted Christian workers, father and son, who to-day are themselves "finding men," were discovered through his ignorant denunciations.

PRAYER IN A SLUM TENEMENT

Here is a record of answered prayer taken from Mr. Hugh Redwood's God in the Slums. In this instance it is possible to trace in some measure how the answer came, but that in no way invalidates the fact of God's activity, for it all began through the conversion of a drunken woman.

Mr. Bottle, two years ago, lacked the one thing he needed most—work, and possessed the one thing he wanted least—a drunken wife. Mrs. Bottle wasted no love upon her husband and no labour upon her children or her home. Until Mrs. Bottle, most astonishingly, was converted at a slum post meeting.

Mrs. Bottle ceased to drink and began to pray. She prayed that Mr. Bottle might find work, and he found it. She prayed that her elder children might do likewise, and sure enough to three of them employment came.

Mr. Bottle was uncomfortable about it. He didn't like his wife "going to the Army," and he signified the same in the manner usually observed among objecting husbands in the slums. But Mrs. Bottle persevered. She had one bad lapse at the end of a year, but though her grief over it was bitter, she had the faith and courage to try again, and she obtained what the Army knows as "the blessing of a clean heart."

But recently she fell ill—gravely, alarmingly ill. At the hospital an operation was found to be necessary. "Humanly speaking," says the doctor, "there was not the ghost of a chance for her. Before she went under the anæsthetic I asked her if she was frightened. Her reply was that her children and the Army officers were praying for her. She was sure it would be all right. Why, then, should she be frightened? She is the bravest little woman

I know. That she came through the operation satisfactorily is due absolutely to her quiet spirit and hopes." (Mrs. Bottle, of course, puts it differently.)

Mr. Bottle, with his wife in hospital, was a sorry man. He looked round upon his slum home and his children, so different now as the consequence of Mother's conversion. And it was then that the great idea came to him. The slum officer was praying for her; therefore she would be sure to return. Why not give her a surprise? Full permission to go to the Army as and when she liked, and a bonnet to go in? He consulted the slum officer and the unthinkable thing was done.

Mr. and Mrs. Bottle have since removed from the slums and are installed in a Council housing suburb where they possess (in addition to the bonnet) a bathroom (h. and c.) and every convenience. It happened like this.

The landlord called upon them just after Mrs. Bottle's return from hospital. He had frequently called upon them in bygone days, but that is neither here nor there. He brought them the news that the houses in their street had been condemned, and that he had been asked to recommend the four most respectable families for transference to the new suburb. One of the four was the Bottle family.

*

THE DUTCH ATHEIST

Sister Eva of Friedenshort has become world famous both for her saintly life and for her books on faith and prayer. She tells here a remarkable case of a man who was transformed through being persuaded to offer a prayer in which he had no belief. This passage is taken from The True Meaning of Life.

Some years ago I knew a man called Tämbring who lived in a little town on the Dutch border. He did more

for his fellow men than anyone else in that place. He worked in a spinning-mill and had been a Socialist and an Atheist. One day his little niece fell ill, and his sister, who wanted to fetch a doctor, asked him to stay with the child. The little one was dangerously ill, and while she was tossing feverishly she said: "Uncle, pray that I may get well again." Tämbring could not pray. "Uncle, pray!" the child begged. Much embarrassed, he tried to calm her, but in vain. "Uncle, if you don't pray I shall have to die." Then, strong man that he was, he fell down beside the little bed and cried: "Oh, God, if there is a God, hear me and heal the child." The little one smiled, comforted, and laid her head on the pillows and fell asleep. Her breathing grew more regular, a profuse perspiration broke out, and when her mother returned some hours later with the doctor he said in astonishment: "The child is saved."

Tämbring went quietly into his room and locked the door. When he came out again, he was a new man. He bought a New Testament and the Gospel message became his nourishment and strength. He lived with his parents and gave them most of his pay, so that he only had a little money for his personal expenses. With this he used to buy leaflets and tracts. He lived a life of prayer. He would spend the brief intervals for rest in his working day in a tiny room where the tow for cleaning the machines was kept. There he laboured in prayer, and there he received power to be a blessing to others. After his work was over, before he even had his supper, he would walk through the little town distributing his tracts and leaflets. This opened the door for him to many homes and gave him influence with many souls. If he found a home where the husband and wife were at variance, or neighbours who had quarrelled with one another, he would not leave off praying to God for them, nor interceding for and rebuking the offenders, until love

had reunited them. He would watch beside lonely sick folk, and whenever he saw anyone in need, he would share the little he had with him.

His former companions once poured brandy into his can of coffee. When he noticed it he quietly emptied out the contents. One evening he met a troop of wild fellows on the street. "Come along to the pub, Tämbring," they said, but he refused and attempted to pass on. Then they seized him and dragged him into the saloon. They jeered and mocked at him, but Tämbring stood there quite calm. "Now that you brought me in here you shall hear what I have to say to you," he said. And then he let his full heart overflow. He preached to them Christ the sinners' Saviour. The men stood there astonished and perplexed and their mocking ceased. When Tämbring turned to go, no one tried to stop him, they had heard enough. That young factory-hand was a true witness to Christ Jesus in his town. He did not live in vain. Prayer was his power, he was a priest unto God in a workman's smock; his whole life was one "divine service."

This humble figure rose before my eyes while I was writing, for Tämbring is a proof of the fact that extraordinary conditions and special spiritual education are not needed to become an intercessor after God's own heart. It is possible to live a life hidden with Christ in God in a factory, or a mine, while doing housework or office work. There is always a time and place for prayer, if we truly desire it.

Lord, teach us to pray! Amen.

*

FEEDING THE TWO THOUSAND

Most people have heard of Müller's Orphanage at Bristol, which was opened in faith, and which has for many

years been sustained by the power of prayer, no direct financial appeal ever being addressed to the public. Food supplies at the orphanage often dwindled until there was practically nothing left, yet Müller's faith remained undaunted, and in response to prayer fresh supplies always came—often in astonishing ways. In this passage taken from his book, The Path of Prayer, Rev. Samuel Chadwick relates a remarkable instance of a direct answer to Müller's believing prayer.

Every praying man knows of answers to prayer to which there is no explanation but in God. I am reluctant to quote examples, but in my own life they abound, and the language of Psalm cxvi. is often on my lips:

“I love the Lord, because He hath heard
My voice and my supplications.
Because He hath inclined His ear unto me,
Therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live.”

There is one remarkable instance that I cherish because of the way the story came to me. There are two buildings in the city of Bristol which are monuments of answered prayer. One is Müller's Orphanage, and of the other I am not at present at liberty to speak. Dr. A. T. Pierson was my friend, and he was the friend and biographer of Müller. It was from him I got the first half of the story. He told me of an occasion when he was the guest of Müller at the orphanage. One night when all the household had retired he asked Pierson to join him in prayer. He told him that there was absolutely nothing in the house for next morning's breakfast. My friend tried to remonstrate with him and to remind him that all the stores were closed. Müller knew all that. He had prayed as he always prayed, and he never told anyone of his needs but God. They prayed. At least Müller did, and Pierson tried to. They went to bed and slept, and breakfast for two thousand children was there in abundance at the

usual breakfast hour. Neither Müller nor Pierson ever knew how the answer came. The story was told next morning to Simon Short of Bristol, under pledge of secrecy till the benefactor died. The details of it are thrilling, but all that need be told here is that the Lord called him out of bed in the middle of the night to send breakfast to Müller's Orphanage, and knowing nothing of the need, or of the two men at prayer, he sent provisions that would feed them for a month.

*

THE MAN WHO BELIEVED IN GOD

Yet another astonishing instance of a great work begun and sustained by prayer is the China Inland Mission, founded by Hudson Taylor; which, during the eighty-five years since its founder sailed for China, has administered funds totalling nearly £6,000,000, all voluntarily subscribed without a public appeal ever being issued. These two brief extracts from By Love Compelled, written by Marshall Broomhall, tell how Hudson Taylor's faith in prayer directed his policy in China, and of the way in which his prayers were answered.

In the same month as Hudson Taylor landed in Shanghai the Crimea war broke out. A financial crisis followed in Europe and America. In 1857 almost every Bank in the United States stopped payment. Without establishing a connection, it is significant that at this very time the Chinese Evangelization Society fell into debt, and as Hudson Taylor felt that this was dishonouring to God, he retired from the Society and cast himself directly upon God for the supply of all his temporal needs.

"I could not think that God was poor," he wrote, "that He was short of resources, or unwilling to supply any need

of whatever work was His. . . . To borrow money implied, to my mind, a contradiction of Scripture—a confession that God had withheld some good thing, and a determination to get for ourselves what He had not given. Could that which was wrong for one Christian to do, be right for an association of Christians? ” Therefore to satisfy his conscientious scruples, he resigned from the Society, and out of this experience grew the faith policy of the China Inland Mission.

In the years that followed he learned, in a new way, to prove God’s power and willingness to answer prayer. And this was not in finance alone, but in the varied needs and unforeseen emergencies of life. Here is one of his early testimonies on such matters.

“The writer has seen God, in answer to prayer, quell the raging of the storm, alter the direction of the wind, and give rain in the midst of a prolonged drought. He has seen Him, in answer to prayer, stay the angry passions and murderous intentions of violent men, and bring the machinations of His people’s foes to nought. He has seen Him, in answer to prayer, raise the dying from the bed of death, when all human aid was vain; he has seen Him preserve from the pestilence that walketh in darkness, and from the destruction that wasteth at noonday. For more than eight and a half years, he has proved the faithfulness of God in supplying the pecuniary means for his own temporal wants, and for the need of the work he has been engaged in.”

In the autumn of that year, 1886, the first meetings of the China Council of the Mission met to organize and consolidate the work. These meetings were preceded by a prolonged period of prayer and fasting, and a few days after the close of the session a cable was sent home by Hudson Taylor saying: “Join us in prayer for a hundred new missionaries in 1887.”

This was a tremendous request for a Mission only twenty-two years old. It entailed rapid expansion and corresponding developments at home and abroad. It also called for a rapid rise in the Mission's income. It taxed the resources of the Home Department, for about six hundred candidates applied, and it imposed heavy burdens on the administration on the field. The hundred new workers sailed during the year 1887, and the income rose from £22,000 to £33,700, and that without any appeal. Eleven contributions alone supplied no less than £10,000, and thus little extra strain was imposed upon the financial department at home.

So confident was Hudson Taylor that God would answer prayer that at the Annual Meeting in London on May 26, 1887, he said: "We have been led to pray for one hundred new workers this year. We have the sure word, 'Whatsoever ye shall ask in My Name, I will do it, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.' Resting on this promise, it would not have added to our confidence one whit if, when we began to pray in November, my brother-in-law, Mr. Broomhall, had sent me a printed list of one hundred accepted candidates. We had been spending some days in fasting and prayer for guidance and blessing before the thought was first suggested to our mind. We began the matter aright—with God—and we are quite sure we shall end aright."

CHAPTER TWO

HEALING BY PRAYER

OF recent years the question of healing through faith and prayer has come into some prominence, and the literature on the subject is considerable. Faith in the possibility of faith-healing has been enhanced by psychological study (though religious people have held to it when the fashion was to deride it), and some writers are content to explain away the religious element in such cures by ascribing them to "auto-suggestion." It is, however, very shallow thinking which supposes that because orderliness has been discovered in the process, or because there is a place in it for human co-operation, that God's activity is therefore ruled out; or indeed, that because we have labelled it with such a term as "suggestion" we have explained it.

In any event, psychological suggestion is inadequate to account for what has occurred in response to prayer, for healing has resulted when patients were far beyond the point where they could consciously receive suggestion, much less practise auto-suggestion. Furthermore, there is reliable testimony to the fact that healing has occurred when people have prayed at a distance from the sufferer, and when it was therefore quite impossible for them to offer deliberate or unwitting suggestion.

That prayer sometimes fails to heal no more discredits its value than the fact that the doctor sometimes fails in his efforts discredits medical science. We must, however, beware of thinking that success or failure is due to caprice on the part of God. God is love, and perfect love is wholly

trustworthy. And there is abundant evidence to show that when men trust God, even although their prayer for deliverance is not answered, they receive strength for their trial; and what must be otherwise doggedly endured or bitterly resented, becomes a means of spiritual enrichment to them and often to others. No one who has looked upon those who suffer from disease could say that lightly; but no one who has heard from the lips of sufferers what they have received through prayer could think that prayer is merely disregarded. In this chapter, then, we will consider prayers for healing.

*

IN A LONDON HOSPITAL

It is scarcely necessary to state that Mr. Philip Inman has for many years been associated with Charing Cross Hospital—first as Secretary and now as Governor. He has mixed with the most eminent medical scientists and surgeons of our time, and few men have done more to bring medical aid to the sufferers who need it. Yet from his own experiences in the hospital he is certain that prayer can sometimes heal where the surgeon's or the physician's skill would not avail. These remarkable testimonies to the healing power of prayer are taken from his book Christ in the Modern Hospital.

Rosslyn Mitchell is one of the best-known public men in Scotland. He was formerly the Member of Parliament for Paisley. He is a solicitor of wide and extensive experience. He is a man whose word can be accepted without question. And he vouches for this story. A very dear friend of his suffered for many years from an internal swelling. The time came when her medical men sought other advice and she was examined by two surgeons who intimated that the growth must be removed and they arranged for the operation to be performed three days later.

On the evening before the date fixed, this woman prayed. To use her own words, "I prayed that the hand of the surgeon might be guided so that if it was God's will I might be spared to my children. Then I seemed to hear a voice saying, 'Have you still a greater faith?' and I said, 'I know that God does not need a surgeon to do this and that if it is His will, He can take it away.' And then I had a feeling of great peace and went to bed. In the morning when I awoke the lump had gone."

The woman kept her appointment with the surgeons, who declared that the swelling had completely disappeared. That is ten years ago and not a trace of the trouble has returned. Rosslyn Mitchell says that story is true. I believe him, for I can vouch for a similar case.

A man in the early forties came to see me one day. He was a shopwalker of a big stores in the West End of London and he told me that for some time he had been troubled with a pain on his right side. His local doctor who had examined him was not satisfied and had referred him to the hospital. He was placed under the care of an eminent specialist who declared that there was a growth there of some kind and that X-ray investigation would be necessary. As a result the verdict was given. An operation was essential and the patient was told that as soon as there was a vacant bed he would have to enter the hospital as an in-patient. The day following, I had a visit from this man's wife. "I am worried about my husband," she started, "and I want to know if an operation is necessary." She was assured that it was imperative and efforts were made to allay her fears. "The surgeon is a brilliant man," she was told, "and every confidence can be placed in his skill and judgment." But the woman seemed unconvinced. "I have a strong feeling," she went on, "that if this operation is performed my husband will never recover." And without any further word she walked out of the building. Then came the day when the patient was due to be

admitted. He arrived two hours before the appointed time and he said that he had come early because something strange had happened. "That lump in my side——" he exclaimed excitedly. "It's gone! Disappeared!" He was duly examined and his statement was found to be correct. The swelling had completely vanished, and an X-ray examination showed not the slightest trace of it. When the patient heard this news he asked quietly if he might use the telephone, and the next minute, with eyes shining, he was talking to his wife. Before I left the room I heard him say: "It's all right, dear! Your prayers have been answered."

When I rejoined him a little later he looked a different being. I asked him if he would let me into the secret. "Last night," he said, "I went to bed about ten o'clock. I wakened in the early hours of the morning to find my wife was not in the room. Anxiously I went downstairs and there in the sitting-room I found her—on her knees." And with a smile he added, "That is all there is to tell."

That is not an isolated story. It can be matched by many other remarkable instances. Here is another case.

In a London nursing home there lay a young woman, waiting for the sentence of the specialist. Although she did not know it, that decision would be momentous in its consequences. Life or death hung in the balance, and on the morrow the verdict would be pronounced. By the side of the patient sat a man—her man. Two years ago those two were married, and they had been ideally, almost absurdly, happy. Now fate had stepped in, threatening to rob life of all its glamour and grandeur. The outlook indeed seemed ominous. That girl had been going downhill for months. She had lost weight to such an extent that she had become a living skeleton. The man knew what the doctors feared. The X-ray report had spoken about a growth. To-morrow the surgeon was to try his

hand and exercise his skill. In a few hours he would know the best—or the worst.

Early the next day that distracted husband returned to the nursing home. Like a caged lion he paced about while the hours passed slowly away. At last he heard a commotion on the landing and eagerly, anxiously, he looked to see what was happening. Up the stairs he bounded. He caught a glimpse of his wife as she was carried out of the operating theatre. She looked unnatural, almost ghostly. In her eyes there was no light of welcome, and on her lips no loving word. The anæsthetic still held her mind imprisoned in shadow-land. And it was well. It enabled that man, before he saw her again, to recover from the shock of the verdict. Quietly, tenderly, the surgeon broke to him the news. The patient's condition was worse than expected, and there seemed no possibility of any cure. "How long do you give her?" asked that man. The surgeon hesitated. "It is difficult, almost impossible to say," he said. But the husband persisted. "Please tell me," he begged, "I would rather, far rather, know the worst." And when he heard the words, "Probably six months," the light died in his eyes, and he became suddenly old. Six months, six short fleeting months, and then the end—unless a miracle happened.

Then one day the husband of that patient came to see me at the hospital. I thought it was to tell me that his wife had died and I was wondering what I could say to him in reply. Words sound so cold and empty at such a time. But when he came into my room I saw at once that it was not bad news he had come to tell. His face beamed as he told me what had happened. His wife, given six months to live, was still alive, although it was two years since she left the nursing home. That was not all. She had put on two stones in weight and her health was better than it had been for years. "The specialist who operated upon her is here to-day," he remarked, "and

he was anxious that the students should see her." I asked that man how he accounted for the remarkable cure. He said that immediately after her operation his wife declared that she would get well again. Her faith seemed a fantasy; her hopes doomed to failure. And yet the unexpected happened. Is there any human explanation? Psychologists have for long dilated upon the power of the mind over the body. Doctors themselves bear witness to the value of the will to live. But was there any other agency? When I asked that husband for his opinion he smiled. "I have no explanation to offer," he said, "except the words of Coleridge—'He prayeth best who loveth best.'" "You believe in prayer?" I asked him. "Believe in it?" he answered. "I have proved it."

It allowed for no argument. There was no need for further words. That man was as convinced of the efficacy of prayer as he was of his own existence. He had tested Christ's promise for himself and found it to be true.

When I was a boy one of my favourite hymns was:

"Jesus, high in glory,
Lend a listening ear;
When we bow before thee
Children's praises hear."

I think that Christ who loved the bairns so much must be tenderly responsive to the prayers of a child. I am sure it was so in this case.

It was in the Children's Ward that one day I saw a girl in the early 'teens sitting by the side of one of the cots. There was nothing really striking about her except for just one thing. Her clothes were loose and ill-fitting, her hair coarse and straggly and her face almost the colour of alabaster. But her eyes lifted her above the ordinary or the commonplace. They were, in Southey's words, "blue, darkly, deeply, beautifully blue." If the eyes be the index of the soul, then that girl had no need to be ashamed of

hers. For a few minutes I watched her. She was gazing intently upon the little boy reclining in that cot. Then she looked up at me and in the depths of those wonderful eyes I saw a grave anxiety. "It's my little brother," she said simply, "he's only five." I looked at the chart hanging at the foot of the cot and I read on it the dreaded word, "meningitis." I suppose she must have seen the shadow cross my face for she said, "I know he's bad, but I am sure he will get better, because I love him." Later I made inquiries about the girl. She was the patient's eldest sister, but she was far more than that. She was known in Peabody Buildings where she lived as the "Little Angel." Her mother had been dead three years, leaving five little children, and this girl had shouldered the burdens of motherhood. It seemed as though part of that burden was to be lightened. But not in the way she wanted. The next day I telephoned to the Children's Ward for news of that little boy. I was told that he had passed a restless night and was very poorly indeed. When I went my rounds later on, I saw the "Little Angel" sitting there. She came up to me and in a voice of tender appeal said, "You won't let him die, will you?" I reminded her of her own words of the day before. But there was a great doubt in my heart. That little boy had reached the stage when human skill could do little more for him. His recovery—or otherwise—was in the hands of a higher power. There was nothing to do but simply stand by and wait. Nothing to do? That is not quite right. For when later that day I went again into the ward I saw that girl kneeling by the cot. She was caressing what I first thought was a string of beads. But I saw that at the end there was a cross. I am sure that the prayer of this girl found its way to the throne of grace.

Within half an hour the little patient was sleeping soundly. That rest did for him what no medicines could do. The next morning he was decidedly better.

When I saw that little mother again all the anxiety had vanished. And her eyes shone with the light of a joy unspeakable.

Just one other story. The Drummond Ward of the hospital will never forget a boy of eleven who was one of its patients. He was suffering from an incurable and painful malady and there he lay waiting in that interval "before sunset," for the surgeons had pronounced his case to be hopeless. His disease had spread like the roots of a tree, until almost every part of his body was affected. For weeks he had been tortured by agonizing pain and his only rest had been an artificial sleep induced by drugs, but now morphia had been administered so often that it was losing its effect.

Day by day I stood by his bedside. This child patient was of the stuff of which heroes are made. All the nurses called him "Sonny," and a more appropriate name could not be found, for sunshine radiated from him. He never spoke about his sufferings. When he was asked how he was the reply was always the same: "I feel much better, thank you." When things were at their very worst, Sonny simply buried his head underneath the bedclothes, and as you stood by you could hear him whistling.

One Good Friday morning a large congregation attended the three hours' service at St. Martin-in-the-Fields. The Rev. "Dick" Sheppard told the story of our boy patient, and throughout the whole of that service the suffering child was constantly brought before the mind of the congregation. That Good Friday night Sonny had his first natural sleep for months. He awoke refreshed and strengthened. Every night he slept soundly without the administering of any drugs. Every day he chatted about the heroes in the books of adventure he was reading. Never was there a greater hero than this lad who lay in that hospital bed. When the end came he faced it with a smile. The remarkable thing is that from that Good

Friday to the day of his death he had no more spasms of real pain.

There are sceptics who will discount these stories. They will seek for natural reasons to explain them. They will say that the doctors must have been mistaken in their diagnosis. Anything before they will admit of miraculous intervention. Such people conveniently forget that in other fields miracles are constantly taking place. Wireless, for example, would appear miraculous to our grandfathers. The supernatural of yesterday has become the commonplace of to-day. So with the science of healing. What are X-rays and electro-therapy but modern miracles? And what about the cures wrought through a man like John Maillard? I believe there are great mysteries waiting to be revealed. And faith is the key that will unlock those doors. "Everything is possible to him that believeth."

In saying these things I am not decrying medical skill. One of the main channels through which God has always worked is that of human agency. What I would like to see is the return of that time when medical and spiritual healing were in partnership. Christianity was founded upon the essential unity of a man's body and soul. "He sent them forth to preach and to heal"—that was the great commission. And for a long time the relationship remained unbroken. The hospitals in their early years were run by religious bodies and many of them retain evidences of their birth and upbringing by their very names; hospitals like St. Mark's, St. Bartholomew's, St. Luke's, St. Thomas's and many others. That spiritual atmosphere still prevails in most of our institutions to-day. Lord Moynihan was once invited to operate before a distinguished group of fellow surgeons. "How can you work with such a crowd round you?" a friend asked him. Lord Moynihan smiled. "You know," he answered, "there are just three people in the theatre when I operate; the patient and myself." "Three," said his friend, "that's

only two. Who's the other?" "God," replied Lord Moynihan.

*

A CASE OF CANCER

Mr. Philip Inman in the preceding passage refers to the cures wrought by Rev. John Maillard. For many years Mr. Maillard has been expounding his faith that the commission to heal the sick through prayer has not been withdrawn from the Church, and establishing his claim by striking cures at his healing services and at his home at Milton Abbott. Here is his own account, taken from his book, Healing in the Name of Jesus, of how he came to be certain of the power of healing through prayer, and of his call to a ministry of healing.

Whilst I have always taught that no person has any special gift of healing which may not be the possession of others, and have emphatically disclaimed any special gifts of my own, I have confidently affirmed that all Christians can be channels or instruments of Divine healing, since all can pray and become transmitters of the love of God. It may therefore be of interest to my readers to hear how I awakened to this realization, and will prove that I neither make any personal claim, nor is it necessary for me to do so. All can walk and live in the path opened by Christ.

By the time I was twenty I seriously considered giving up my whole life to social reform activities, and associated with some of the movements which were working for that end. I discovered, however, that no society, party or movement could possibly succeed in establishing fellowship or brotherhood amongst men unless it had a spiritual foundation, and that the Church was the only society which had a spiritual foundation upon which a world fellowship could be built. It was chiefly the *world* vision of Jesus Christ which drew me into the ministry of the Church.

I looked upon love as the greatest force in the world, although most of us have been too blinded by other things to see it. Human love was very precious to me, and already I had proved that it has power to heal. The thing had happened in my own family circle. When, in later years, I first heard of the healing ministry of the Church, it seemed to me to be an easy and natural step from the healing which I had witnessed through human love to the healing which I now believed was possible through Divine love, since God's love was so much greater. I have always thought of these things in terms of love. The Gospel of St. John and his Epistles were my favourite reading.

Many experiences have enlarged my consciousness of the unseen world which enfolds our visible world, until my mind has taken on an abiding sense of the Kingdom of the Spirit, and my life is now lived and I have grown to depend more upon the powers of God which reside in the spiritual realm, to which I now turn regularly as an unconscious habit, whereas formerly the things of material science had a larger sway.

The healing mission has brought me into close personal contact with numbers of sufferers, and many close friendships have resulted. I have loved them and they have loved me. I have been with many of them when they have reached the threshold of the Higher Life, and not a few have promised that they would help me and pray for me from the Heavenly Home. I believe that they have done so. This has been my experience. It has made the Communion of Saints a present reality.

I was ordained in 1911 in the Diocese of London, and went to work in an East End parish in the dockland of Poplar. Within the first twelve months I came into contact with Mr. James Moore Hickson, who visited our parish to help us amongst the sick and suffering. This meeting was my first definite contact with the healing ministry as forming a part of the mission of the Church. I soon

formed the same regard and reverence for Mr. Hickson which I had had for the friend of my business days. I went with him into the homes of the poor and the sick, and co-operated with him in the ministry of healing. There were many remarkable results. Amongst them I witnessed the healing of one of our Catechism girls who was crippled with infantile paralysis and had to wear a surgical boot and irons. When I visited the East End three years after the War, she was a young woman. I should not have recognized her, but she made herself known. The healing was perfect.

Another remarkable instance of healing was that of a woman who had not been visited by Mr. Hickson. She lived in my district of the parish, and I discovered her on one of our periodical house-to-house visitations. I knocked at the door, but there was no response. I turned the handle and found that the door was unlocked, so I went into the passage and asked if anyone was in. A voice came from the back room, and I entered it. I discovered a poor sufferer in bed. She quickly told me her story. She had been in three of our big London hospitals and had had operations for cancer, but had not been cured by them. The last of the hospitals offered her the choice of remaining as an in-patient or of returning to her home. She had been a nurse in an East London district, and knew everything about sickness. I prayed with her and laid my hands upon her head whilst doing so. This had now become my normal practice in all home visits to the sick and suffering. Soon afterwards I took her the Holy Communion. Two days after this I visited her again, and discovered a marked improvement in her condition. She told me that when she received the Holy Communion she felt a glowing warmth in her body, and this had continued. The improvement was maintained, although the progress was slow. Bit by bit she recovered, and one of her first outings was a visit to the hospital from which she had taken her discharge.

She went straight to the ward where she had been a patient, and the first person she met on entering it was the ward-sister. The sister stared at her in amazement, and at last said, "Why, you are a resurrection!" The house-surgeon was told, and he came up to see her. He was surprised and delighted. He asked her to come back again on the students' day, so that he might tell them in the lecture room how she had been healed, as she had been one of their interesting cases, and had allowed them to subject her to experimental and drastic treatments. This sufferer became one of my dearest friends, and is to-day after a space of twenty-three years.

The surgeon had not suggested that there had been a wrong diagnosis in the first instance. It was a straightforward case of cancer, attested and treated by eminent doctors and by surgical operations, examinations, remedies and the like.

Before leaving this parish I had a Vision of the Healing Saviour. We had a little chapel in which the Holy Communion was reserved for the needs of the sick and suffering. I was in it one morning, spending a time in prayer in preparation for visits to some of the sick to whom I was to take the Holy Communion. Whilst I was kneeling, I was praying for them one by one, and the prayer became a picture of all the sufferers in my district who were known to me. Then I saw our Lord in the midst of them, with His Hands behind His Back, looking upon them with great tenderness and love. Presently He began to turn, and then I knew why His Hands were behind Him. They were tied. The interpretation of the Vision came swiftly. The Hands which wanted to touch and heal the sick were held back by the unbelief of the Church. Christ was not free to heal.

My belief, to which I still hold firmly, was based upon the experience I had gained amongst the poor in the East End of London in pre-war days. The healing ministry

had shown me that Jesus is the same yesterday, to-day and for ever. No other ministry had made the living Presence of Christ so real to me, and I did not know of any other ministry which brought the living Christ so fully into one's life, or made the Christ-life so possible.

I am conscious of a spiritual universe all around me, as I believe our Lord was also conscious. It may be unseen by our physical eyes, but that does not mean that it is an empty space, or a space in which there is only ether or some other atmospheric content. The consciousness of Jesus rested in realities which were unseen, and not in the physical and visible thing with which we are only too often preoccupied. Indeed, Jesus came to set us captives free from the bondage of material things and our material thoughts about them.

*

MANY THAT WERE SICK

After hearing the testimonies of a hospital governor and an Anglican priest, we listen to a London journalist, whose experience of the healing power of prayer came to him through his association with the Salvation Army. Mr. Hugh Redwood, in his books, Kingdom Come and Practical Prayer, cites cases of healing that he has witnessed; but gives a wise warning against preoccupation with prayer as a means to physical health, as though health of body were an end in itself.

The Christian ought not to hesitate when asked which is the greater, healing of body or healing of soul. The body is but an envelope, and sickness and death of the body are at worst only matters of time, whereas all that concerns the soul concerns eternity. The fact remains that one case of bodily healing is a more convincing piece of evidence with the generality of people, than a score of cases of life-changing. For that reason, and because the evidence

of changed lives is about us on every hand if we care to look for it, I have elected to document cases of bodily healing.

In February 1931, I received word of a "miracle" in Westminster. The facts as recited were so astounding that I felt it essential to check them for myself, and I give them here after full inquiry.

The story starts with a bus collision in Knightsbridge. It was during the war, when women served as conductresses, and the conductress of one of the buses, Miss H——, was thrown into the roadway and badly injured. She was then twenty-seven years of age.

Years of illness and distress followed, spent partly in lonely lodgings and partly in hospital. For a little while she performed light duties at the offices of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, but by the end of 1924 her condition had become such that all work was out of the question. She was so badly crippled as to be virtually helpless except when wearing a contrivance of steel and leather; she had undergone a series of operations, and she was suffering intense and continuous pain. In 1925, following an X-ray examination, spinal disease (caries) was diagnosed, and the doctors decided that Miss H—— was incurable. Their verdict was confirmed after prolonged treatment under the direction of specialists in two of London's leading hospitals, and at the end of 1927 hope was finally abandoned. She was then little better than a living corpse, being unable to walk, stand or sit, while one of her legs was one and a half inches shorter than the other. A five-in-one instrument, however, was devised for her, which comprised a spinal support, an abdominal belt, a pelvic support, a leg iron and a surgical boot; and by this means she managed to do the work of the little flat in which she subsisted on her disablement benefit and out-relief, supplemented by the slender proceeds of knitting, needlework and fretwork. A self-propelled chair enabled

her to get about the streets, and she was a well-known figure on the Millbank estate.

Two more years passed, during which she was sustained entirely by her faith. Always an earnest Christian, she had become a Salvationist, and she spent much of her time reading the Bible, studying the miracles of Jesus, and trying to understand the mystery of her own bodily shipwreck. While thus engaged, in January 1931, she read something on which she took instant action. Let her relate what happened:

"I began to pray," she says, "not for healing, but that God would permit me to walk, and then I turned accidentally to James v. and read these words:

"'Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:

"'And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.'

"At once I wrote to the Salvation Army, and on January 22 I went in my chair to the Westminster Central Hall, where the Army was holding some special meetings. I had asked that I might be anointed, and after some delay an officer was found who was prepared to do it. To the questions he asked me I replied that I did not believe there was any special virtue in the oil, beyond the fact that God's Word prescribed it; that I did not think anything was required of the anointer beyond a belief in the power of God; that I myself firmly believed in that power, and that if nothing happened to me, I should at least feel that I had not disobeyed the prompting of the Spirit.

"On this understanding the officer, bringing another with him, came to my flat in the afternoon of January 23. Having first asked a blessing upon it, he took the olive oil I had provided and anointed my forehead with it. Then he placed his hands on my shoulders and prayed,

I prayed also. In ten minutes it was all over and the officers had gone, after I had promised them that I would do whatever God required of me.

"For about an hour I sat quietly. Then I thought I would go out, and I reached for my two sticks, for I could not do without them, even though wearing supports. But now they seemed strangely awkward in my hands, and something urged me to put them down. I was telling myself that I could not get my chair without them when, like a flash, I remembered my promise. I put my sticks down at God's bidding, and I have never had to take them up since.

"Somehow I got to my chair without them, and never had it seemed so easy to work. I took my irons off that night and got up the next day without them, was able to do my housework without them, and found, to my utter amazement, that my limbs were straight again. On the Sunday morning I felt impelled to go to a chapel at which I was known and tell the congregation what God had done for me. After that I went to my own Salvation Army corps. Neighbours gaped at me from the windows and stopped me in the street to shake hands. I took the bus on Monday and went to the Salvation Army headquarters, where the officer to whom I had written in the first instance broke into hallelujahs as I walked into his room."

Miss H—— is now living in Sussex. I visited her again in July 1933—two and a half years from the date of the Westminster "miracle"—and saw for myself the grounds upon which her doctor had based the opinion that "her condition shows every sign of permanence." She took me the better part of two miles to see a farmer's wife whom she was nursing, and for the whole of the distance she set the pace, walking firmly and without a limp.

The officer who anointed her is Brigadier William

Booth Davey, and I have had the opportunity of comparing his own notes with hers. They were made quite independently, but tally in every respect. Brigadier Booth Davey has well-defined views on the subject of Divine healing, but before coming to them we may glance at two other cases in which he has had a part to play.

The first is that of a young married woman, mother of two children, to whom he ministered when she was, to all appearance, in the final stages of tubercular meningitis, blind, paralysed and unconscious. Her father, it may be mentioned, had died just previously from a tubercular disease, and the illness was complicated by the fact that she was expecting a third child and was suffering from bad gastric trouble. The Brigadier laid his hands upon her and asked God to restore her to health. There was no visible result, and when he called again on the following day she was still unconscious; but he prayed in confidence that the process of healing had begun, and on this occasion anointed her.

That night she recovered consciousness, asked that the ice-bags might be removed from her head, and expressed a desire for food. The paralysis disappeared, sight returned, and within a few weeks she was well. The baby born five months later was perfectly normal and, if anything, healthier than the other children. Three years afterwards the family came to bid the Brigadier farewell before sailing for New Zealand. The woman had had no subsequent illness, and was able to report that she felt better than ever before in her life.

The second case presents this difference, that the Brigadier's part in it was confined to prayer and the giving of counsel. A man whom we will call Mr. B——, proprietor of a laundry in a Lancashire town, and sergeant-major of the local Salvation Army corps, was suffering from "middle life consumption." Two of his brothers had died from it at the age of forty, and he, who had

now reached that age himself, was apparently doomed to the same fate.

Mr. B—— often talked with the Brigadier about God's power to heal. One night he and his wife knelt beside their bed in prayer. His wife rose and got into bed, but he prayed on. She fell asleep, and still he prayed. At two o'clock in the morning he roused her.

"Do you believe the Lord can heal me?" he asked.

"Oh, yes!" came the sleepy response. "I believe He can do anything. Do get into bed."

But Mr. B—— did not get into bed. "I believe He has healed me now," he said, and in that belief he went downstairs and brewed some tea. Salvationists, it may here be remarked, make tea on the slightest provocation. He found a post card and penned a terse note to the Brigadier: "The Lord Divinely healed me at two o'clock this morning." Then he went back to bed for a spell, rose in the same fortifying conviction, and on reaching his place of business wrote out a notice for display to his customers, announcing his restoration. On the following Sunday he electrified his friends by attending the open-air meetings. "He was a skeleton to look at," says the Brigadier, "but he marched like a man who is full of life and power."

Mr. B—— mended steadily and put on weight. He sold his laundry and became an insurance agent. Throughout the ensuing winter he was out in all weathers and suffered no ill effects. As a man of forty-two he was called to the colours, for it was war time, and the medical board placed him in the A1 category. The Brigadier notes, under date 1930, that the man has had no illness since, has shown no further sign of a consumptive tendency, but on the contrary is strong and healthy. He belongs to the same Salvation Army corps, and is the father of the bandmaster.

What is the power by which these cures were effected?

"Nothing medical, metaphysical, magnetic or spiritualistic," says Brigadier Booth Davey. "Not prayer, as some think of its power, i.e. as something to be massed or concentrated with the object of breaking down God's will. Not faith, though it comes to us by faith. We believe that God is healing before any evidence is given. It is to be believed as a present reality, and then ventured on. It is the life of Christ in our own body. It is the self-same power of the Holy Spirit by which He healed the sick when He was upon earth. It is one of the things He came to bring, and to which born-again Christians have a right."

How then explain the instances in which it is inoperative, or in which it is invoked with only limited results? It is here that we tread on perilous ground. We make increasing use of the power of electricity as our appreciation of its power grows, but nobody knows what electricity is. We have various proofs of the power of the Spirit, but lacking full knowledge, we cannot determine its nature or state the exact conditions in which it works. While there can be no question, as the Brigadier says, of our breaking down the will of God, one glimpses the possibility that there are insulations of one kind and another which His power has to break down before it can take effect in our bodies. There is first the insulation of an incomplete faith, and then, as it seems to me, there may be a much more obstinate insulation as between our spiritual and physical natures. Either or both may suffice to thwart what is certainly a spiritual force, for the approach to the body is surely by faith through the soul, and there is thus a two-fold gap to be bridged. In support of this view, we have the obvious fact that cases of genuine conversion, the spiritual transformation of lives, are of everyday occurrence, whereas cases of bodily healing are so rare by comparison as to be hailed by Christians as miracles.

One point on which Brigadier Booth Davey is emphatic

—and I am sure he is right—is that Divine healing is not an end in itself. Like every true miracle of God it has its place in the plan, but is incidental to the plan's fulfilment. To read the words of Christ is to be assured of it. Time after time He gave the same warning to those whom He healed: "*Don't go talking about it too much.*" Why was this, if it was not to guard against the danger that the crowds whom He longed to win would come to Him as the Healer of their bodies rather than as the Saviour of their souls? The danger is just as great to-day, greater, because of the danger to the human intermediary. The Brigadier discountenances "healing services." He tells me that when, at one period in his ministry, he announced them in the hope of increasing his congregations, the number of cures at once showed a falling off; and he adds: "there is nothing to be feared so much in this work as becoming the object of attention. It is heart-to-heart and soul-to-soul contact with the living Christ, and with Him alone, that will accomplish the result."

In view of what has been said about the massing and concentration of prayer, it is necessary to point out that many cases are on record in which healing has followed on the concentrated petitioning of "prayer circles." I know of at least one, and the cure—it was a case of sleepy sickness which had been given up as hopeless—was in every way as radical as those already described. Does the prayer circle, in such circumstances, take the place of the men who broke up the roof and lowered into the presence of Jesus the bed on which the palsied man lay? United strength may be needed to bring one who is completely helpless into the healing Presence.

The Rev. E. Howard Cobb, Warden of the Home of Divine Healing at Crowhurst, Sussex, has supplemented the information in my possession with some valuable extracts from his own case-books, and I am specially indebted to one who has been healed through his ministra-

tions for giving me in writing a personal statement of the facts.

Miss G—— is a woman of fifty who for half her life suffered from acute asthma. Uninterruptedly, year after year, she had daily and nightly attacks with the regularity of the clock, some of them lasting as long as three hours, and in March 1924, she was forced to give up her work. She had then been under medical care continuously since 1911. She had undergone vaccine treatment for thirty weeks, had had her nose cauterized once and her throat cauterized twice, and had had twenty-six teeth extracted, although, as she says, they were perfectly sound. Altogether she had consulted five doctors and two specialists, and had spent pounds on inhalers and powders.

In April 1924, she went into hospital, and for some time was kept alive by means of oxygen, adrenalin injections, and amyl-nitrate vapour. She was discharged as "improved" at the end of seven weeks, lived on her small savings until they were exhausted in 1927, then obtained work which could be done at home (since she could never go out in wind, rain or cold weather), and in the summer of 1931 broke down completely again, the old attacks returning. It was then that she read of the Home at Crowhurst, and she entered it on July 24.

"I was anointed on August 7," she writes—her statement is dated August 14, 1933, two years later. "Two nights previously I had been ill with asthma the whole night through, but the night before the anointing I gave Sister all my apparatus and told her she could put it in the dust-bin. I have never seen it since.

"When I was anointed I knew I was healed, and I smoked a cigarette in the garden to prove it to other people. Smoke hitherto had been the bane of my existence. I have had no attack of asthma since. I am back at my work, go out in all weathers, and eat any kind of food.

"During the last two years I have seen my doctor twice, once with influenza and once with a gastric attack. Apart from these two slight lapses, my health has been practically perfect."

Mr. Cobb's notes include one of a woman visitor from overseas, who entered the Home on February 6, 1933, suffering from a tubercular spot on one lung, diagnosed by a doctor in Ealing by the aid of an X-ray photograph. She had been coughing blood. This woman, after a week in bed, was anointed, and left again on March 1, her doctor and his partner both pronouncing her perfectly healed. Their verdict was confirmed by a third doctor at the end of April, and a letter written from her distant home in July reports her in excellent health.

Here is an extract from a letter, sent to me some time ago, which deals with the cure of a case of thrombosis (i.e. the obstruction of a blood-vessel or organ by a clot of blood). The patient, a woman, whose health had long been indifferent, was treated without success by a specialist. In the calf of her right leg she had a lump which her husband describes as "like a nasty abscess that would not come to a head." He proceeds:

"Our minister is interested in healing and lent us two books. The records they contained gripped my wife and gave her faith. She said to herself, 'If Christ can heal these people now, He can heal me,' and she then and there made her direct appeal to Him.

"During the afternoon she felt the 'core'—the seat of the trouble—subsiding, and it gradually went right away. The veins, which were hard, and clogged and inflamed over the whole calf, gradually lost the inflammation and softened. . . . This was two months ago, and my wife, instead of being an invalid, hobbling about with a stick, is now going about her routine and walking in a natural and sprightly fashion."

Here we have a case in which a believer, who had

suffered intensely, prayed for herself, being convinced that Christ could heal her. But supposing that it had been for another, and not for herself, that her prayer had been required.

How ought I to pray if one whose very malady makes him almost incapable of sustained thought, asks me to intercede for his healing? The case, we will say, is the too common one of nervous exhaustion, accompanied by insomnia. We have assumed compassion to be of the greatest importance in prayer for others; a fair question, therefore, for me to ask myself, is whether, for love of my neighbour, and out of a desire to intensify my compassion for him, I am prepared to forgo a night's sleep, in the hope that by doing so I may help him. If my present compassion is not sufficient for that, can I reasonably expect to be of any service? It can hardly be enough for me, a sound sleeper, merely to "remember" my friend before God as I go yawning to my own bed.

There have been times when we have sat at the bedside of some loved one and watched the weary night through, with an intense longing that restorative sleep might come to the sufferer. Hours, perhaps, have passed, and still the pain-filled eyes have been open. Then, in the grey of dawn, we have been rewarded; we have seen them close, we have heard the smoother respiration, and we have said a little prayer of thanksgiving because, somehow, we have felt that God allowed us to have some part in it. If I am ready for a night vigil in which, by faith and love, I can watch and pray at my friend's bedside until he falls asleep, then, perhaps, I can really help. I do not know that this is so, but I do suggest that it is one of the matters which should be studied by schools of prayer.

And what will happen if we can get whole congregations praying in the same frame of mind? A good deal has been published lately on this subject, and the Rev. W. J. Roderick, editor of the *Bristol Congregational*

Monthly, has kindly given me permission to quote the following, which appeared in that journal for August 1937.

"Prayer is fellowship with God, and not a magical means by which we can beg. Nevertheless, by bringing ourselves into line with the will of God, harmony is restored and things happen. . . .

"A friend of mine was taken to a local hospital with lung trouble, and was there for six months. Treatment had failed, and she was discharged under grave circumstances, because the specialist had told the husband that she might live a brief time, but might go under any moment. The orders were that she was to lie in bed for most of the day and night. Taking her to the south coast by car was a trial that made all who cared for her apprehensive.

"Writing home, she expressed a desire to live, and she wondered whether people were praying for her. A request for prayer was taken to the prayer meeting. The strange result is that the following day a letter from her informed us that the doctor was amazed with her improvement. That good news was reported to the meeting the following week, and in two days we heard again that progress was maintained. To-day she regularly attends church. . . .

"About four months ago a child a week old was said to be dying. It had developed nasal trouble, which made breathing and suckling impossible. A temporary aid was devised by the doctor, but he told the matron that the child could not live unless there were an immediate change in its condition.

"Twice that morning death was feared. The matron told the mother that she had better have the child christened that day. In the evening the father and mother with the child and matron were in the room at the christening in an atmosphere we shall not forget. Prayer was made for its recovery. Progress was reported almost immediately, and when in a week's time we saw the babe, the matron said that recovery began that night when it

was christened. To-day it is quite well. Do not carp about details. The fact is that the child recovered. By what means? Psycho-therapy? Hardly. Coincidence? Explanation too facile. 'More things are wrought by prayer than the world dreams of.'"

Salvation, adds the writer of the article, means newness of life, and it could mean health. Healing, however, is not to be emphasized as a central theme, because salvation is so much more important.

People who write to me tell me often that God has not heard their prayers, or that God has not answered their prayers. What they mean, of course, is that their prayers have not been granted, which may be quite a different matter. There are prayers (sometimes quoted in their letters) which God ought not to hear, because they ought never to be uttered. But there are also the prayers of people who cannot take no for an answer, and that is a pity, because it is quite certain that some of God's most wonderful answers are answers in the negative. I know it in my own life; I have seen it in the lives of others.

Once I talked in my office with a woman whose lot it had lately been to hear the doctor pass sentence of death. She told me her life story, and I thought how differently it might have been told. It might have been presented, without any departure from the facts related, as one long series of frustrations. She had given her heart to God in early life, but in almost everything she had sought to do for Him she had encountered obstacles which had turned her back. To-day she thanked God for them; she could look to the past and see that in every case she had been diverted to some better path, in one or two instances to paths whose existence she could never have suspected. Seen against the light of God's love, every obstacle had a glory about it, and was one more link in the chain of evidence, with the result that it was now so complete as to render her proof against fear. That which the doctor had

told her had left her unafraid. To some it would have been the final frustration; to her, in her own words, "it was as if I had rounded a sudden bend in the road and found myself in full view of the Eternal City."

I am five years farther along the highway than when I wrote of God's leading in *God in the Shadows*, and each of those years has its record of prayers to which He has answered "no." I have a ministry for Him now undreamed-of five years ago, one which brings me greater happiness than I ever expected to know, but it would not have been mine if He had said "yes." I have friends who help me with those who are friendless: they have been given me because He said "not yet." He has said "no" and "not yet" on other occasions for reasons I cannot fathom; but I am content with what I can see, and one day my vision will be extended. I, too, shall round that bend in the road.

*

HOW CAN THESE THINGS BE

Such evidence as we have cited to the healing power of prayer raises many questions. The efficacy of prayer does not depend upon our ability to explain how it works; but God having given us inquiring minds, we cannot refrain from seeking to understand; and when we can attain to it, knowledge can reinforce faith. In the following pages Rev. Leslie Weatherhead, famous as a practising psychologist no less than as a preacher, discusses the problems raised by healing through prayer, and gives further reasons why we should fulfil the injunction of St. James and pray for the sick.

I shall try to answer the questions most frequently asked about healing through prayer.

"How is it that we pray for one man and he recovers and we pray for another man and he does not? We do

not understand why in either case. Therefore, it is argued, prayer offers no wise way of combating disease."

If a man is prayed for and he does not recover, it may be that our co-operation with God breaks down at some point or another. It may be on the physical side or it may be on the psychical side. And the reason why we cannot co-operate fully enough to bring back health may be either that we do not know enough or that we have not faith or love enough. In both cases, we must learn more and learn how to call out faith. Prayer, like everything in God's universe, is not accidental in its way of working. It is based on laws. And we must try to learn what those laws are and under what conditions they operate.

On the other hand, of course, it may not be God's will that the person shall recover. We must not assume too readily that God's will for everybody is perfect health *under all conditions*. I think we may assert as a principle that the ideal intention of God for everybody is perfect health of mind, body and spirit. At the same time, it is comforting to remember that where, for various reasons, including man's ignorance and lack of faith, perfect health cannot be brought to a patient, God can still weave suffering into His own plan and make His strength perfect in weakness.

.

"How do we know that prayer is the healing factor in many cases? The patient might have got better in any case."

This is a favourite argument of some medical friends of mine. They say to me, "You pray for a patient in the City Temple on Sunday evening, and if he gets better you pretend that the cure has been wrought through prayer. Probably the patient would have recovered in any case, and you have no right to assume that prayer was the healing factor."

This is a cogent and relevant question to ask. For

many years I have asked it myself. But I do wish to say that at the City Temple we have records of a fairly large number of cases where a definite turn for the better was made *during the hour when prayer was offered*. I have quoted one in my book *Discipleship* (p. 59). When you have a large number of cases, some of them regarded as incurable by the medical profession, and when recovery begins during the time the patient was being prayed for, it becomes a greater strain on one's credulity to believe that prayer has nothing to do with it than to believe that, since prayer is the only common factor to all these cases, it has very much to do with the recovery of the patient. Particularly is this so when the patient is quite unconscious that he is being prayed for.

At the same time, of course, I quite agree that a great deal more must be done by way of early and careful diagnosis. When I quoted to a Harley Street specialist the cases mentioned by Dr. Howard Somervell in his book *After Everest*, he said, "Of course, it could not have been cancer."

One is almost amused by some of one's medical friends who are certain that their diagnosis is correct, and who offer the most gloomy report to the patient's relatives, telling them he will not recover; and then, when prayer is offered and the patient recovers, they lamely say that the diagnosis must have been wrong, and it couldn't have been that disease at all.

At the same time, I am still hoping that the day may come when we can persuade a "hopeless" cancer patient to allow part of the tissue to be removed for microscopical examination. I am told that this is the only way in which one can be perfectly certain that the patient is suffering from a malignant growth. If such a microscopic test were carried out, and then, subsequently, the patient entirely recovered, we should have a water-tight case. But, of course, it is very difficult to arrange this.

At present we know so little about the conditions under which healing prayer can be offered and healing faith called forth, that to refrain from surgical operation where that is possible would not be offering the patient the best means of combating his disease which is at present available. But in cases regarded as inoperable it might be possible to carry out the test suggested above. In any case the fact that recovery has again and again begun when prayer has been offered makes a *prima facie* case worthy of our consideration and investigation.

“Is it likely that God will allow us to make a short cut by praying for a person, and thus do away with the necessity of careful diagnosis and treatment, and especially research and understanding of the nature of disease?”

No! It certainly is not. But why should we limit research to material ways of helping in the healing of disease? I want to suggest that research be carried out in non-material ways of healing; and prayer is one of them. If the evidence for the healing properties of some new drug were as strong as the evidence for prayer, the drug would have an enormous sale and it would be in universal use.

We live in a materialistic age, and the things that are seen and touched and proved through the senses have a tremendous sway over our intellects. I feel that we are tyrannized by the modern idolatry of science, and we scale down our faith in God to those processes in His universe which we, forsooth, can dimly follow. I say “dimly” because admittedly no one knows what electricity is, for example, let alone why short-wave therapy is effective for some complaints. There are many treatments in common use at modern hospitals which have behind them far less evidence of their value than the practice of prayer for the sick.

"Is it not true that many cases for whom prayer is made relapse into illness again?"

Personally I have not yet met one. In many cases no apparent advantage follows corporate prayer for healing; but if there is any recovery at all, then in the cases I have watched carefully, it goes through to complete restoration of health.

One case I reported to the Methodist Conference last summer was that of a paralysed woman who was expecting her first baby. The surgeon was about to operate, believing that the mother could never deliver her child. Then we prayed. The mother walked and the baby was born in the usual way.

Here is part of a letter received from a Methodist friend:

"You may like to know that Mrs. T. and her baby, who were healed through the power of prayer from your fellowship, are both enjoying wonderful health, and they have been in perfect health ever since we lifted them up to Christ a year ago."

At the same time we must remember that every means employed for human welfare is subject to set-backs. Prayer is no exception to this. Surely we are not going to throw over a means of helping people and easing their pain because, in certain cases, through conditions that we do not yet fully understand, there is a relapse.

"How can prayer make a difference to a patient suffering from an organic disease? If we could understand how prayer operates," the questioner continues, "it would be easier to believe in it."

Let us admit in the first place that there must be limits to what prayer can achieve in a human body. I find it impossible to believe that, if a man has lost his leg, prayer could grow him another one in a night. Many people will smile at such an admission, and yet they are credulous at

just as difficult cases. For instance, if the optic nerve is completely destroyed, let us say by a rifle bullet or by shell fire, I find it impossible to believe that prayer could be the means of restoring missing tissue quickly and at once. Even those who accept only the statement about the missing leg must admit that a line has to be drawn somewhere between the possible and the impossible.

It is just as important, to my mind, however, to insist that *no one knows enough to draw such a line*, or to make a list of illnesses and divide them into two, and say: "On this side of the line prayer is potent to heal; and on the other side of the line you may as well save your breath."

Nor, I think, does anyone know enough to be able to determine exactly the way in which prayer acts. In the last article I made a suggestion. Let us put it in another way. One has been in a hospital ward when a man was fighting for breath. Unless something could be done to enrich the atmosphere with oxygen he would be bound to die. But what is called an oxygen-tent is rigged up, the life-giving gas is inhaled, and the life of the man is saved.

It is not, in my opinion, an exaggeration to say that, figuratively speaking, in a very true sense the mind depends on its atmosphere. It may be breathing the atmosphere of pessimism or despair. The mind may be worn out and defeated. I have spoken, I should think, with hundreds of patients who have said, "The turning point in my illness was the point when suddenly I determined to get better," or "I felt that I was going to get better," or "I knew that I should get better." In other words, the mind breathes a new atmosphere of hope and belief in recovery.

Is it not possible that the prayers of people, linked with the living purposes and power of God, have such an effect on the mind of the patient, conscious or unconscious or both—and we have seen something of the influence of one mind upon another, and of the influence of mind upon body—that the whole psychical atmosphere which

the patient's mind is breathing is changed? The depressed mind becomes optimistic; the defeated mind finds new hope; the worn-out mind finds new strength; and all these have a tremendous effect upon the body, possibly through the endocrine secretions.

Another question into which we must go carefully is this:

"Do you not misuse prayer by making it a form of treatment?"

Yes, this is a most important matter. Prayer is not to be regarded as a treatment, as a kind of spiritual equivalent of, shall we say, electric massage or some drug. We try to teach at the City Temple that the object of prayer is communion with God, and that health is a by-product. Like joy, we cannot achieve it by merely trying to get it. Joy comes when the personality is serving the community happily with all its powers.

In the same way, I do not think it is right or wise to attempt to use God as a means to our end, even when our end is a good one, such as we believe health to be. We are the means, God is the end; and the end of prayer is God, not ourselves. But when our prayer aims at getting the patient into the fullest harmony with God, we believe that it is functioning rightly, and that, as a by-product, in case after case (not all, but many), health will come. Many illnesses disappear when unity with God is achieved.

Strangely enough, within the last day or two, I have had a most interesting case, which I think illustrates the point.

Five months ago, a young girl of seventeen was brought many miles from a distant county to the City Temple to be interviewed by me. I interviewed her parents and the girl herself with great care, and carried out a psychological examination. It would not be fair to give details because the family are Methodists, and they will probably read

this article. Suffice it to say that the case was one of almost unique difficulty in my experience, which now goes back nearly twenty years. It was definitely a psychological trouble, but it resulted in the most queer physical symptoms which one could imagine. I had read about such cases, but had never seen one. And I felt that the case was beyond me altogether.

I therefore arranged for the patient to see a Harley Street specialist—a personal friend of mine for over fourteen years, a great Christian, a fine doctor, and an excellent psychologist, who helps me at the City Temple psychological clinic. He spent over six separate hours with the patient without being able to make the slightest impression. Sadly enough, the young girl was sent home and told that nothing could be done for her. I had a letter from her mother thanking both the doctor and myself for all we had tried to do, and telling us how grateful and yet how disappointed the family was. I learnt afterwards that the girl sobbed herself to sleep, feeling that the last hope of recovery had gone.

Some time passed, and I had a growing uneasiness that we had let this girl go home and given up her case; because to give up a case is against all one's ideals, unless, of course, the case is out of the psychological area altogether. One night I dreamed of this girl, and waking up out of the dream, I wrote down her name on the pad at the side of my bed. As soon as I got to my study the next day I wrote to the mother telling her to tell the girl that, on the following Sunday night, we would pray for her. The mother says that the very message made a difference to her daughter.

On the following Sunday night I asked the congregation to pray for this girl. No names were mentioned, nor was the nature of the illness revealed in any detail. Yet, from that night to this, there has been no return of the illness. The girl is perfectly well. She has taken up the

career she wanted to take up.

Last week the Chairman of one of our Methodist Districts happened to meet the mother of this girl and was told the whole story. He wrote to me, having interviewed the girl himself. His report is that she is still perfectly well and has had no recurrence of her troubles. Since it is five months now since we prayed for the girl, we are hoping that the word "cure," which one uses with a greater and greater reserve, may be used in this case.

Yesterday I asked the Harley Street specialist whether he thought it possible that he had started, by his six-hour treatment, a process which had resulted in cure, irrespective of our prayers. I knew that I had done nothing for the girl myself, but I thought perhaps he might have done. But very quietly he said, "No, I did nothing. It is to me a miracle, an act of God Himself, without any help from us except our praying."

I want to repeat this word, however. Prayer is different from every other means of recovering health, because its aim is not health but communion with God. For this reason, unlike scientific methods, prayer is not suitably tested by its results. For instance, it is no test of a "good" prayer that health follows, and no sign of a "poor" prayer that illness remains. We must remember that we can have faith without healing, and we can have healing without faith.

During my last summer holidays I went to worship at a little South Coast town and heard a splendid sermon preached by a Methodist minister on the curing of the lame man, in the Book of Acts. But the preacher completely spiritualized his subject. He spoke of the lameness of our sins, and the lameness of our doubts, and so on, and showed how they could be healed. I fully agreed with every word; but I did wonder why he watered down the

incident so that it only applied to that type of healing.

Would it be true to say that most of us have really given up all thought that the things that happened in the Book of Acts can happen to-day? I refuse to believe that. I do not believe that anything has been withdrawn. I believe that God's Holy Spirit is at work in the world now as much as in the stories recorded in the Acts so long ago. There is no reason on God's side why everything that happened in the Book of Acts should not happen in England in 1938.

"Is any among you sick?" said St. James, "let him call for the elders of the Church and let them pray over him. The prayer of faith shall save him that is sick, and the Lord shall raise him up. And if he has committed sin it shall be forgiven him." Do we really believe this or is this one of the passages of the New Testament which we conveniently leave out? By all means let us call in the doctor and the surgeon. Let us use all the resources of modern science, for these, too, are within the purposes and will of God. But let us not make them substitutes for a definite approach to God and the releasing of His healing energies in our lives.

One thing is certain: Whatever the Church says is possible or impossible, however poor the official faith of the Church may be, a mother will go on praying for her sick child. Surely we ought to help. I regard what we call "The Fellowship of Silence" at the City Temple as, in a sense, the Church at family prayers. I think we should be free to mention names to lift up our beloved members to the throne of grace, as we should do in a family at home. I would also like to see definitely established in every Church, prayer-circles, composed of people of faith and devotion.

This scientific generation is in danger of forgetting that "more things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of."

CHAPTER THREE

GUIDANCE THROUGH PRAYER

"PRAYER," says Rev. Dr. Eric S. Waterhouse, "is the necessary sequel to freedom. The fact that we find ourselves placed upon this earth, with the materials out of which we construct our future in our hands, make it imperative to believe that a God who is good and wise would not let us remain unguided and uninformed." Thus, prayer is not merely making our requests known to God, but listening also to what God has to say to us; and that God does guide men when they place themselves trustfully under His control, is shown by the fact that the perception of new moral principles which the world has later acknowledged as true has always come first through men of religion. There has, in fact, been a process of development in human understanding of goodness, God being able to reveal His mind ever more perfectly as men have fulfilled what they already understood of His will. And what is true of the life of the race, is true also of the individual. As men pray they become more sensitive to the will of God, and discover His purpose for them as individuals in relationship to their fellows.

Whether God guides us in the sense of telling us precisely what we ought to do in a given situation, or whether He gives to those who seek Him principles rather than precepts, reinforcing their desire to do right by giving them the energy and will to discover the best way to its achievement, is a matter in dispute among Christians. Some people seem to have received particular directions, and by following them have achieved remarkable results.

Others, without such a sense of guidance in specific situations, have found through prayer a strong conviction of moral guidance to which their life must be conformed, and have brought every situation to the test of their best hours of prayer.

Whatever the method, the important fact is that men can, through prayer, put their lives under control of One who is infinite in love and power, and that they thereby attain the assurance that their lives are being directed, and that they need not be fearful or anxious.

*

BE STILL AND KNOW

Creative Prayer, by Mrs. Herman, is a wise and beautiful book on the spiritual life; and we begin with an arresting description of the response from God that comes to the soul waiting upon Him in silence.

The alert and courageous soul making its first venture upon the spiritual life is like a wireless operator on his trial trip in the Pacific. At the mercy of a myriad electrical whispers, the novice at the receiver does not know what to think. How fascinating they are, these ghostly pipings and mutterings, delicate scratchings and thin murmurs—and how confusing! Now he catches the plaintive mutterings of a P. & O. liner trying to reach a French steamer, now the silvery tinkle from a Japanese gunboat seeking its shore station. There are aimless but curiously insistent noises, like grains of sand tumbling across tar paper: these are the so-called “static” noises of the atmosphere adjusting itself to a state of electrical balance. Again, there come series of tuneless splashings—that is heat-lightning miles away—followed by the rumour of a thunderstorm in the opposite direction. Now he thinks he has got his message, but it is only the murmured greetings of ships

that pass in the night. And then, just as his ear has begun to get adjusted to the weird babel of crossing sounds, there comes a remote and thrilling whisper that plucks at his taut nerves and makes him forget all his newly acquired knowledge. It is the singing of the spheres, the electrical turmoil of stars beyond the reach of the telescope, the birth-cry and death-wail of worlds. And when he is steeped soul-deep in the spell of this song of songs, there comes a squeaking, nervous spark, sharp as the squeal of a frightened rat. He decides to ignore it, and then suddenly realizes that it is calling the name of his own boat. It is the expected message, and he nearly missed it!

So the soul that waits in silence must learn to disentangle the voice of God from the net of other voices—the ghostly whisperings of the subconscious self, the luring voices of the world, the hindering voices of misguided friendship, the clamour of personal ambition and vanity, the murmur of self-will, the song of unbridled imagination, the thrilling note of religious romance. To learn to keep one's ear true in so subtle a labyrinth of spiritual sound is indeed at once a great adventure and a liberal education. One hour of such listening may give us a deeper insight into the mysteries of human nature, and a surer instinct for Divine values, than a year's hard study or external intercourse with men. That is why the great solitaires always surprise us by their acute understanding of life. Dwelling apart from men, they none the less have a grasp of human nature which the politician and the financier might envy. They are at home among its intricacies, have plumbed both its meanness and its grandeur, and know how to touch its hidden springs of action. And they know man because they know God and have heard His voice. To know God "pre-eminently" is their distinction, and it may be ours, at the cost of simple, painstaking honesty with our Maker.

NOT BY MIGHT NOR BY POWER

Rev. G. F. Dempster has had many remarkable experiences of being guided to help those who are astray from God. Here is one taken from Finding Men for Christ.

“Love never faileth.”

It is often asserted that there is a “black sheep in every family.” Whatever may be the underlying fact which gave rise to such a theory, it is true that in many homes and families there are sad hearts because of the waywardness of a member of that family circle.

At a certain business house in London I used to call occasionally when there was no particular business to transact, but as a friend and counsellor to those who, like their fathers before them, directed the affairs of the big concern.

On this occasion I had called in that way, and the partner whom I met that day was greatly agitated through the illness of his wife and the conduct of his only son, upon whom both parents had showered every care.

His father confided in me the sad fact that although the best education had been given him, and his home had provided every comfort a youth could desire, his conduct for nearly two years had caused his mother's serious illness which threatened at the moment to prove beyond the doctor's skill. Only one hope remained. If by some wonderful means their only son could be discovered and brought to see his folly, there might be possible recovery. The boy had been intended to follow in the business. But the way of life he had been following compelled the partners to protest against his having any share in the affairs of the firm. I learned that in those two years the father had suddenly become an old man. His fine capabilities and splendid mental powers were becoming

clouded. One member of the firm told me that if the young fellow had been his son, he would have dealt very severely with him. But the father was "too kind."

How easily the onlooker legislates without understanding. This father knew a "better way." We talked the matter over, and I believe that the little child's prayer for her daddy sent this other father to prayer as never before.

One evening I paid a visit to a certain gay place, not as a participant in or a mere observer of its devilry, but to find that son. My experiences there would be a revelation to many Christians who tolerate such places.

No wonder that it is recorded that "Jesus beheld the City and wept over it." That ancient City and our modern Babylon have much in common. Amid all the glamour and appearance of gaiety, He knows the sadness and emptiness, the soul-destroying artificiality of it all.

This place was adjacent to one of our great Christian churches. The crowds who enter and leave that Sanctuary little know that under its shadow there exists a very hell where, daily, souls of men and women are being destroyed. The power of the purse is such that men grow richer still through the degradation and follies of their fellows.

I did not know exactly how to find my man, but it was managed by a remarkable "coincidence." Such would be the term applied by many, but I know that the guidance was of God.

Among the men I saw about the entrance was one I recognized as an officer in the Merchant Service. He naturally would never expect to see me there, nor did I anticipate that he would be seeking admission to such a place. Nor was he really. The fact was that he was being lured by another older man, and was nearly giving way at the precise moment when I saw him.

As I stepped forward to speak to him, he started as if he had been struck. Truly he had been, but not physically.

He later told me he thanked God for my surprising appearance, for he had foolishly but reluctantly consented to visit the place, although on arrival he repented, and was therefore hesitating when I appeared. Now he would not go in. There was a scene. He was almost dragged in by force, but, as he afterwards admitted, the so-called friends only revealed more truly, by their language and conduct, the danger he had escaped.

He was, indeed, very grateful for my timely intervention, but why had I so opportunely arrived there, and what was my object? I told him. Told him of the man for whom I was searching. He was interested and would like to help me. Could he do anything?

I thought he could. He could tell me something of what his quondam friends had told him about the place and its habitués. He described to me the procedure of those who regularly attended, and presently as he was mentioning one feature which was to be part of this particular night's programme, I was sure that the man for whom I was searching was the "host" of this particular group of visitors.

"Do you know the chap's name?" I asked.

"Do you mean the fool with the money?"

"Yes!"

"Oh, I should know it if I heard it again, but I've just forgotten it. Why do you ask, padre, you couldn't know him, I'm sure?"

"I've an idea that your host is the man I've come to find. Is his name ——?"

"Yes! indeed, that is his name. He was the tall fellow who was trying so hard to get me along. I've never met him until this evening, but they told me he spends lots of money here, and his father is well-to-do."

"Then I must go in and find him. I shall know him again. Will you help me by remaining here on sentry, and let me know if he should leave? Can I trust you to

do this bit of real service as a sign of gratitude that you've been helped to resist temptation to-night?"

The lad clasped my hand fervently. "Padre," he said, "while you've been talking to me I've been taking stock of my own position. I was nearly gone, and possibly if I had entered that place, my future, both physical and spiritual, would have been imperilled. I owe you something, and I'll never forget. I know that my mother's prayers follow me, and I've been kept to-night because of her. I'm all right now, thank God—and thank you. Now what can I do? I'm ready for anything you ask. I'll keep watch for you, and if he should come out I'll hold as I've been held. Eh?"

It was agreed, and I made my way inside. I was, of course, challenged. The woman who asked for my card had not seen my attire. I had a soft cloth cap and a thick muffler which hid my clerical collar. But as I gave her my card I removed my wrap and said:

"I've come on an errand of mercy."

I think she was about to be rude, but something in my voice or appearance seemed to check her. Her manner changed again. Meanwhile I was endeavouring to take her measure. She was obviously much older than she seemed at first glance. Her finery and artificial colouring were a pretence of youthfulness, but this woman had lived sufficient years to have been the mother of some of the youths who were indulging in the orgies that night.

"You're out of place here, sir," she said, in a troubled voice.

"Yes! I fear I am," I replied. "But then, so are you, if I am any judge of humanity. You have not always been in such a place nor in such circumstances."

Again I thought she was going to speak defiantly, but the words did not come. She bit her lip as if resisting a strong impulse.

"Now, look!" I pursued, "I want your help in my

errand of mercy, and if you have anybody you love, try and sympathize with a mother whose heart is breaking and a father who is losing his courage. I am trying to find their son, and he is in there."

"Which one?" she asked. She was clearly off her guard. Something I had said was affecting her.

I described the youth I had seen enter. She identified him at once.

"You'll do no good with him, I'm afraid. He's a young fool, but very popular here. I'm sorry for him, too, because I've got——"

She was very serious now, and I waited for her to finish the sentence she had abruptly ended. She did not continue.

"A boy of your own?" I ventured.

She started, then laughed almost hysterically, broke off again, and stared hard at me without another word.

"Are you a mother?" My turn now to look earnestly at her. She bent her head, and just then some more men, mostly very young, arrived. They were evidently all so well known that no challenge was necessary. But I heard their greetings as they passed, and felt as if I were somewhere near "where Satan's seat is." They did not appear to notice me, and as the lights were dim at this part of the corridor, I was able to remain unobserved. As they parted the heavy curtains to enter the larger apartment, I saw the kind of place it was. There were all the evidences of riotous profligality. Men and women, for the most part young, were engaged in various ways, drinking, playing cards, dancing, apparently doing just as they pleased without any order or organized method. In various parts of the apartment were screens arranged to enclose small groups or couples. The aroma of cigars and scented plants came towards us, and there were strains of alluring music from an orchestra hidden from sight.

I saw the young man in whom I was interested seated

at a small table with two women, all smoking and gesticulating in a demonstratively merry way. The eyes of others about them were directed towards them, and they were evidently the object of much attention at that moment. I wanted to go at once to speak to him, but second thoughts delayed my action.

I turned again to the woman who had challenged my right to enter.

"Can I enlist your help?" I asked her.

She was looking at me with deep intent, and did not reply at once to my question. I waited her response.

"I'm afraid not, and I advise you not to go in, sir, they'll only be very rude to you, and you'll do no good. That young fool is infatuated with the girls in there, and it will be dangerous to interfere."

I thought so, too, at first, but in such circumstances risks do not count for very much. One has to be discreet and careful, but if that young man is to be saved, he must be got away from here as soon as possible. But how?

I now thought of my young sailor friend on guard outside. There would be a certain amount of risk in sending him inside, but it would be less conspicuous. I felt guided to take this course, and mentioned my view to the woman. She agreed it would be better than for me to enter, besides she could perhaps help if it were done that way. We were all three to learn that there was to be another and a better plan not of our making.

I had called my friend inside, and we were discussing what our next step was to be, when sounds of quarrelling came from within, mingled with subdued shrieks of women. We hastened to the archway covered by the entrance curtains, and, as we reached it, it was rudely pressed open, and there fell out into the corridor a mingled heap of struggling forms, in the centre of which was the man I wanted. For a few minutes we were all in it, but somehow I managed to get my man away and left

the others to fight it out. My sailor friend was a perfect brick, standing boldly up for me when I might have been physically insufficient to fulfil my attempt. Together we literally dragged the boy outside into the street, and brushed past a couple of policemen who had been summoned, I presume, either by telephone or messenger. They did not take any notice of us, but hurried inside, followed shortly by two more.

My boy had narrowly escaped what followed. There were several arrests, and I learned later that two society crooks were arrested and imprisoned for earlier misdeeds.

A taxi was hailed, and when I gave the driver the address, the youth suddenly seemed to realize that we were strangers.

"How do you know my home?" he asked.

"Listen, my boy," I replied. "Your mother has sent me for you. She is very dangerously ill, and the doctor says there is but one hope for her recovery. She wants to see you."

"I can't go home like this."

He had been drinking in the short time he was at that terrible place, something which had affected him badly. No, he could hardly see his mother like that. But I could tell that he was feeling the shame of his position. I stopped the taxi and redirected to another rendezvous, where I could have him put to bed and properly cared for while I would proceed to his home and tell his father I had found him, and would bring him home in the morning. He promised all I asked of him. He consented to my young sailor friend taking him along. The latter was now eagerly alert to second all my plans. He pleaded as earnestly as I could have done that our "find" should alter his course of life and give his heart to the padre's God. I made note of this phrase for later use, observing his diffidence in the reference to God. He could not yet say "my Lord." That was to come later; meanwhile it

was very moving to witness this young man who so recently was being led himself "into temptation" now beseeching another to give up the drink and companionships which were ruining him and killing his parents. On arrival at my own home, for that was where he was taken, C—— was put to bed, with a faithful guard over him. Twice during the night there were scenes when the boy awoke with a feverish thirst for more drink, and with a mad desire to kill the man who had insulted and robbed his women friends. Twice he was almost carried back to bed and patiently wooed back to sleep by "a brother man." Meanwhile I had gone to his home, and there witnessed a harrowing scene lasting several hours. The mother's illness had reached a crisis. The doctor was there when I arrived, and the father met me with a tragic look upon his face. "Have you brought any news?" he whispered.

I knew what his soft speech and sad demeanour implied. "Yes," I said, "good news."

In a few quiet sentences I told him that his boy was safely in my care, and I could bring him shortly. The doctor was beckoned from the sick room. I was briefly introduced, and related to him the position, omitting the dreadful part for the present.

"Come with me," he said.

Quietly he led me to the bedroom where the mother lay. He pointed to a chair while he approached the bed. I sat watching and wondering and praying. Presently he stooped over the patient and I heard him say:

"That's better—that's better. Now I've got some good news for you. A friend is here with a message from C——"

There was a movement of the coverlet, and a white hand sought the doctor's. With his disengaged hand he beckoned me to come. I joined him at the bedside, and knew that he meant me to speak. Touching their joined hands, I whispered, "I've just come from C—— and he

sends you his love, and if you are well enough in the morning he will be here to see you."

As we watched, for the doctor was peering intently at his patient, we saw a slight colour tinge the white face and a smile part the lips; then the eyes opened and we caught "Thank God!" The doctor re-echoed under his breath, "Thank God," and gave an audible sigh which I interpreted to be one of relief. He drew me away after gently feeling the wan wrist for a moment.

"Can you believe with me for a marvellous recovery? She was almost gone, and I risked everything in asking you to speak, but I think we've won—or rather—He has shown us what to do. Thank you, sir. Please go now."

During the long walk home in the early morning I had time to reflect on all that happened during those eventful hours. Time also to pray and to appreciate the wonderful leading of God's Spirit. I believed for a "wonderful recovery"—planned what was to be done in the morning. It was morning already, and I hoped that C—— was sleeping. Later I heard of the night incidents already related. But I found the sailor resting in the room with the sleeping youth. I said "resting," for he was not really sleeping lest his further services should be required. He heard me carefully turn the door handle, and was alert in a moment.

"Oh, it's you, sir! I've had a bit of a job with him, but he's here all right, and we're going to win, please God."

For the second time my officer friend had thus used the Holy Name with reverence and deep meaning. I must follow this up carefully. I looked at him earnestly, hoping he might open out to me and explain his position. But a few hours before he was heading for disaster without any visible evidence of a thought of God. Now, he was anxious to secure another's acknowledgment of God, and was himself invoking the Almighty's aid.

"Did you say 'please God'?" I asked softly.

"Yes, padre, I did. During these last few hours I've been looking inside. I've realized how I was on the slippery way down, and that it was not very far to the bottom. I've also realized that it is not so easy to get back again, and that were it not that Christ comes seeking such as I was, and such as this poor chap is, 'lost' is the only fit description."

"Then what has happened, laddie; to yourself, I mean?"

"Well, while I was waiting outside that place for you, and keeping watch for this boy, I saw it all. First I asked myself why you should come around as if you were looking for your own son? Why you should run risks as you did when it would be quite easy to let things slide and say that if trouble came to those in there, well, they had asked for it? I realized that it was something I had not got, and I wanted badly. First to enable me to overcome personal temptation, and then to be courageous enough to help others. During the night I have claimed both the forgiveness of God and the power of Christ, and for me there's but one way now. I belong——"

"Praise God!" I said fervently. "Now then we must work together for poor C——. He'll be waking presently, but we will not disturb him. You go and get some rest while I stay by."

This did not please our new disciple. He wanted to see things through, but I told him how matters stood at the house, that the good doctor was now hopeful of the mother's recovery, and that I had promised to bring her son along soon. He must be refreshed first by as long a sleep as possible, then breakfast and a little preparation for the trying interview. So it was settled. I took his place, and must have slept, for I was awakened by the arrival of a breakfast tray with much needed refreshments.

The movements aroused the sleeping youth, who sat up and stared around him in a dazed way.

"Oh! I remember. What time is it? Where's my mother? How is she?"

These questions were fired off almost in one breath, and I answered them to his satisfaction.

"Breakfast first, talk afterwards," I ordered him with a show of authority.

He gave in at once, but little food was eaten. Then a bath, and in a little while he was ready for conversation. At first abstractedly, like a stunned man recovering consciousness. Gradually he awakened to the present position and to the shame of it.

"I'm an awful fool; but why am I here, and who are you?"

"One of your father's friends and yours."

Then gradually I unfolded the story and its implications. Like a child this big fellow listened, and every now and again winced as a sore point was touched ever so tenderly.

Ordinary human wisdom is altogether insufficient for the treatment of such a case. There is but one Physician who can deal with such a malady as that from which this man suffered. Yet at present the patient was looking only for human friendship. I could tell that he was realizing the situation, but had not yet grasped the truth. He was ill, body and soul. He needed most a soul doctor.

Presently he stretched out a hand to touch mine.

"Is mother yet living?"

"Yes; thank God she is," I replied.

"Is she going to die?"

"That is not within our knowledge, but I hope she may recover and you may do something to help."

"What can I do?" this with a feverish eagerness. He was not yet quite ready to do anything beyond resting. How much farther I could go without retarding his

recovery, I could not be sure. But I was being guided according to promise.

"The first thing you must do has a great deal to do with your mother's recovery. As soon as she is able to receive news of you it must be good news, and the best news your mother can have is that you have made your peace with God. I think you want to do so. I am sure you have had a bitter experience of what happens when you turn away from Christ and just give rein to your own appetites and lower desires. You know that a good deal of your mother's illness is due to her anxiety—her love for you—and her disappointment due to your selfish conduct. But at the moment, even if you wished to do so it is not possible for you to go to her and tell her how sorry you are. You must prepare for such an interview if you can, and the only way I know to prepare is to put yourself right with Jesus."

While I was thus quietly speaking to him, I was earnestly endeavouring to discover how he was responding to what I knew was God's pleading. As a medical man watches his patient under treatment, so one has learned to look for certain results in certain people under given conditions, and while I am still aware that there is a vital difference between the tissue and fibre of the body, and that wonderful thing we call the soul, I also know that there are irrevocable laws governing the spirit. Sin destroys. Love revives. Sin is a disease, corrupting, weakening, killing. "The soul that sinneth it shall die." Love lifts, enkindles, cheers, encourages. "Love never faileth"; "God is Love."

My patient was responding to the treatment and the effects were encouraging. His mind was busy trying to sort out the recent events. The devil was also busy suggesting reasons for resisting the appeal, or at any rate reasons for non-compliance, and mere non-compliance would be quite sufficient to dam up the avenues of the

Spirit's approach. Procrastination has ever been one of evil's most powerful allies. All the old excuses were tried. Other devices were suggested. It was surely not necessary for a young man to adopt the old-fashioned ideas. They were all very well for the past ages and for the older folk. Besides, if he made full confession now and yielded to the voice which now called him, he could not be sure of his ability to live up to the required standard. Promise after promise was quoted accompanied, I knew, by a power not human. "Never man spake like this Man" was true on this occasion. The purely human argument may have had some slight effect, but it was when His Words were given that one could see how slowly but surely the victory was being won.

He was now in tears; tears of deep contrition, and at last I heard him pray: "Lord be merciful to me a sinner." Then with a sudden change of manner which surprised me, he jumped out of bed and asked me to join him in prayer.

To say that I was moved would be a mild description of my feelings. As I now try to recall the scene, I am very conscious of the limitations of human language. The air suddenly became very tense. He was pouring out such an appeal to God as I have rarely heard. Whence came all those great phrases?—that wonderful flow of language which stirred one's soul to the depths? That pleading yet confident requesting for pardon! Much of it was a revelation even to one accustomed to dealing with persons under conviction of sin. Here was a youth whom all his friends thought to be quite incapable of comprehending the finer qualities of the Christian life mentioning the graces of His Spirit as the deep need of his soul. He was talking intimately with a Father who loved him, and giving Him humble praise for His Gift unspeakable. The tenderness with which he mentioned Christ's Name thrilled me, and I knew the battle was won. How long he prayed

I do not know. I only know that when he had finished the audible words there was a great hush, and that when we both looked up at each other his face was lit with a glow which I can only describe as "of heaven." He took both my hands in his, and with deep earnestness he said: "That ends a two years' battle. I've never really been happy because all along I knew that my mother and father were right. I knew that God was wanting me to follow His Word. I knew that there was only one right way and one Saviour. Often there came back to me scenes of other happy days. I recalled words which my Sunday School teacher had said when he little knew that I had even heard them. But especially there came to me again and again the picture of my dad. I knew that his life of loyalty to the Christian principles, his integrity in business, and, what touched me most, his gentleness and patience with me when I was going wrong were evidences of a Power I sadly needed, but foolishly rejected. Now I know that Jesus has found me and saved me. My mother must know. How soon do you think I may go and tell her?"

So it might be possible to fulfil my promise to the mother, that if she were well enough I would bring her boy to see her "in the morning." This I now told him. He begged me to inquire if it could be brought about.

The doctor must be consulted, and I arranged to find out exactly the position. I would not telephone, I would go personally and make quite sure as to the expediency of an early meeting.

At the house I was met at once by the father, who smiled when he saw me, and as his son had done not two hours earlier, he took both my hands in his own and simply looked what he could not say. It was I who had to speak first.

"I can see that your dear one is better," I ventured.

A nod of his head and a pressure of hands said plainly, "Yes, thank God."

We sat upon chairs facing each other, and I told him my part of the story. When I came to the recital of his son's decision for Christ, this strong, dignified business man utterly broke down, and I made no attempt to restrain him. I only feared that the tremendous double strain of anxiety might be too much for his reserves of strength. It was best just to leave him for a while. So I found my way back to the hall and was busily examining there a picture when he had recovered himself sufficiently to follow and speak to me.

"Thank you! I owe you a debt I can never repay. But now about his mother. She is nothing short of a miracle. Doctor was here early this morning and was, I think, more than surprised. I could see that there was great satisfaction in his heart, but all that he said was: 'I'll be back again at noon, and then we'll see if we dare let the boy come'—so as it is now nearly noon could you await his coming?"

Gladly assenting, I followed his suggestion that we should walk in the garden until the doctor arrived.

It was a perfect morning, and the contrast between the quiet peacefulness of that garden, and the scenes of the previous night seemed to make the latter appear as an almost unreal memory, or a vile dream. I knew it was no dream. I knew that again as surely as day faded there would be other souls in like jeopardy, other hearts nigh to breaking, other good homes filled with misery because of sin's allurements and men's folly. I knew that the Master would still be patiently seeking to save such as were being lost, and I prayed that power might be given to His servants who would be out to aid Him in the quest.

We talked quietly over events, and were presently joined by the doctor himself. We had not heard his

approach, but linking his arms in ours as he walked between us, he said:

"Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord."

"I shall never quite despair of any case after this. Your wife's recovery is nothing short of miraculous, and if she gathers strength during the next twenty-four hours as she has during the past four, she will be so far out of danger that I think we might let her see the boy. Where is he and what is he like? I think I ought to see him myself first. May I?"

The father turned to me as if I held the answer, and I took this to be an indication that I might tell the doctor what had transpired. When I had told the story there was a brief silence, broken by the man of science.

"This case has more than ever convinced me that whatever knowledge or skill one might bring to bear in such cases, only Divine Wisdom can deal with the soul. To all intents and purposes that good woman was dying; passing out through a cause which no medicine could touch. She will now recover and the praise is due to God. Now, sir, I must go, but I shall never forget what you have now told me, nor what I have seen in this house. I'll hope to see you again to-morrow at this hour."

I promised, and a little later returned to the young man who was so eagerly awaiting my return.

The following morning he accompanied me to his own home. The meeting between father and son was a scene to be remembered for all time, but the later scene with the mother I cannot venture to describe. Nor can I here tell of an hour's talk with that godly doctor; of that another story must one day be recorded concerning more precious "finds."

The son is now a director in the firm, the father has passed over; but whenever I see that aged mother, all this story returns to mind, and I am grateful for a Saviour

whose power alone could have saved that young man and made him the comfort he is to-day to her whose heart he nearly broke.

*

A COVENANT WITH GOD

Reference has already been made to the astonishing work of the China Inland Mission. Here is the account of how that work was born in the soul of a man as he listened to God. It is taken from Marshall Broomhall's By Love Compelled.

"Not many months after my conversion," wrote Hudson Taylor, "having a leisure afternoon, I retired to my own chamber to spend it largely in communion with God. Well do I remember that occasion. How in the gladness of my heart I poured out my soul before God; and again and again confessed my grateful love to Him who had done everything for me—who had saved me when I had given up all hope and even desire for salvation—I besought Him to give me some work to do for Him, as an outlet for love and gratitude; some self-denying service, no matter what it might be, however trying or however trivial; something with which He would be pleased, and that I might do for Him who had done so much for me."

Though he was but a youth, the presence of God became unutterably real and blessed. "I remember," he wrote in later years, "stretching myself on the ground, and lying there silent before Him with unspeakable awe and unspeakable joy."

"Never shall I forget the feeling that came over me then. Words can never describe it. I felt that I was in the very presence of God, entering into a covenant with the Almighty. I felt as though I wished to withdraw my promise, but could not. Something seemed to say: 'Your prayer is answered, your conditions are accepted.'

And from that time the conviction has never left me that I was called to China."

Out of this overwhelming sense of God's love, and out of his desire for an outlet for his own love and gratitude, the China Inland Mission had its conception and birth.



IN DIVERS WAYS

In the next two passages Mr. Hugh Redwood expounds his faith in the Divine guidance, and gives some instances of how it has operated in his own life. They are taken from Practical Prayer and God in the Shadows. In the latter Big Brother is, of course, a pseudonym for the author.

Guidance is one of the convert's earliest needs.

First, let us remember that such intelligence and common sense as we possess are gifts from God, which He expects us to use and develop. When consultation with either will show us our obvious course, we should not expect other guidance.

The dictates of common sense are often more clear than pleasant, especially when we are in difficulties of our own making. Many of the people who tell me that they cannot get guidance on this or that, mean really that they have been hoping God would show them some easier way.

On the other hand, many of those who claim to be guided appear to use the word with appalling levity. They are so very obviously misguided. It is the easiest thing imaginable, but it is also a thing most perilous, to take an idea of one's own and, simply because it seems good, to ticket it "guidance."

There is also this to be said about guidance. Don't

pray for it unless you are prepared to act upon it. When it comes it may be altogether different from your expectations; it may strike you as impossible, unreasonable or even ludicrous, but if it is God's word to you, obey it.

And finally, because this is inseparable from what I have just written, on no account allow yourself to be persuaded that the guidance of God must be "checked" and O.K.'d before it can be accepted. I have seen something of "checked guidance," and have been honestly frightened by its possibilities. Not the worst of them is that it frequently puts the seal of infallibility on something which is demonstrably fallible.

Every Christian has known times when he had been frankly uncertain whether a prompting was really from God. His right course, in such a case, is to refer it back, and pray for more light. If he is still uncertain, he will do well to take his difficulty to some tried and proven Christian acquaintance, not to ask for his personal verdict, but to seek his support in further prayer. For obvious reasons, he will be wise to choose one of whose disinterestedness in the matter at issue he can be reasonably sure.

These things having been said, let us have no sort of doubt that guidance is real. It can be experienced physically, i.e. as actual guidance upon an actual road, as well as in the spiritual sense. I gave an instance of this in *God in the Slums*, when I described how a man sent out in quest of premises seemingly not in existence was mysteriously led to them within the space of an hour;¹ and since some have asked me if I was perfectly sure of my facts, I may as well admit that the man was myself. Here are the details of a more recent experience which I think it will be agreed was quite as remarkable.

On Sunday, October 18, 1936, I motored with two

¹ The reference is to what is now the Goodwill Centre of the Salvation Army in Abbey Street, Bermondsey. See *God in the Slums*, p. 123.

companions from Haverfordwest to Swansea. We had a full day's programme before us, morning, afternoon and evening services, and a big after-church meeting at night, arranged by the Y.M.C.A. With the best part of sixty miles to cover, we made an early start.

Saturday had been a day of storm, but the morning was glorious, and far away on our left Prescelly's mystic heights were blue against the sky. The overnight gale from the west was still blowing, but it was at our backs to-day, and we made much better speed than we had expected.

Our first service was to be in the Salvation Army citadel, and it somehow chanced that not one of us knew where it was. Swansea is a big and straggling town, and we had no idea in what district the building was situated. But there was time enough for inquiry, so much, in fact, that we decided to run out to Mumbles Head, and rest and pray for a while at the edge of the sea. The friend who had prayed on Dartmoor now read, from the page at which the Testament opened. We shall not forget that reading, the story of Paul's journey from Malta to Rome. We heard how he tarried at Syracuse, how he " fetched a compass " and came to Rhegium, how a wind then blew him (as we had been blown) upon his way to Puteoli and Rome-wards, and finally how the brethren came out to meet him at Appii Forum. I felt unaccountably moved by the straightforward narrative.

I was to pray, and I saw that our time was gone. We had some miles to go, on a road with a speed limit, and we still did not know where the hall was. I was suddenly sure that God would direct us. We had " tarried " and " fetched a compass "; I prayed that we might be shown the way and that the brethren might come out to meet us. I cannot say why I made that specific request: the words seemed to come of their own accord. But having made it, I felt that they had a meaning for us. " If they

should come, Lord," I added, "we shall take it as an assurance of blessing upon our services."

We retraced our route to the spot where we had struck the coast road. It was fairly obvious that we should bear right at the fork, but the fact is I *knew* we should do so. It was by no means obvious a little farther on that we should make another right turn, this time into a side street, but again I knew, as I knew we must turn to the left immediately afterwards. When we took the last turn I looked ahead. At a corner two hundred yards down the street there were splashes of scarlet and gleams of gold. The bandsmen from the Army citadel were gathering for a brief "open-air." The brethren had come out to meet us.

I can see no explanation for this but God's guidance. We had made inquiry of nobody, we had been drawn by no sound of music. The band had not been sent out to guide us by their officer; had that been the case they would have gone in a different direction, since it was assumed that we were coming in from Haverfordwest direct. And we were afterwards told that never before had they stood at that particular corner. It remains to add that from start to finish the day was signally blessed. I am still hearing about the night meeting, attended by so many people that the special choir were unable to get in! It was the first occasion on which, having asked whether any of the crowd would there and then give themselves to their Saviour, I not only saw men and women standing to their feet, but heard their ringing response, "I will!"

Another experience of this kind of guidance happened to me in Cornwall. On a very wet January afternoon—it was a Saturday—I arrived in Penzance, a disillusioned stranger. I have no luck with "rivieras"; it rained for a week without ceasing when I went to the south of France, and here it rained without ceasing throughout my week-

end. Inasmuch as I had planned to spend my time basking in the sunshine at Land's End, some slight readjustment of programme seemed to be indicated. I knew not a soul in Penzance, and my hotel appeared to be empty. All at once I remembered the name of the local Salvation Army officer, Adjutant Thompson. I had heard it in Plymouth, and had imagined (wrongly, as it proved) that he was an old acquaintance of the same name. Something told me to go out and find him.

It wasn't going to be easy. There was no clue in the telephone book, and as officers are always changing appointments, his name was not likely to be in the directory. I knew, moreover, that his quarters would probably be in some humble street. It was raining mercilessly, I had had no tea, and it was almost dark; yet I was being bidden to go out of doors, and even given the general direction to take. I said a little prayer and went.

In a few minutes I was at the top of Market Jew Street, though I did not then know its name or whither it led. A stiff wind was blowing the rain down the back of my neck, but I obeyed an unspoken command to walk down the street on the right-hand pavement. Two women approached me, their heads down to meet the weather, and the nearer one had almost gone by when I saw something which made me stop her. Beneath the upturned collar of her coat I spotted Salvationist uniform and the red tab and white star of an adjutant. She was Adjutant Thompson's wife, and ten minutes later we were all having tea together, planning a Sunday night meeting which made us thank God for the rain.

Now we will look at two cases in which the guidance was of a different kind and was associated with material provision.

The first deserves careful analysis, for the interweaving

of the various strands is a fascinating study. To mention actual names or places might not be discreet in this instance, though every detail is strictly accurate, so I will say only that the three principal parties in the story, living in three different parts of England, are Miss A., Mr. B. and myself. Miss A. is a friend of mine, but Mr. B. does not know her: he, in turn, except as a name, is unknown both to her and to me.

Between 7 and 8 a.m. on Monday, July 6, 1936, I was in my study for my usual quiet hour. It has for some time been my custom on Mondays to make special prayer for material needs.¹ That morning, before I could begin to do so, I was made aware that Miss A. was in some sort of difficulty.

The first act in prayer may come from God, and in time we get to recognize His "call-signs." It was so on this occasion: I was confident He was calling. What Miss A.'s need might be was hidden from me: my prayer, therefore, was that she might be helped and that, if God so willed, I might be shown a way in which I might help her. I resolved that at least I would write to her.

By the second post at my office that morning came a letter from unknown Mr. B., posted on Sunday night. It contained thirty shillings in notes, with a request that the money should be passed on at once to someone in need of it. In the same strange way I was "made aware"; this money must be enclosed with my letter to Miss A. The letter was posted that night; the time on the postmark was 11.15.

Miss A., meanwhile, was very much worried. She is not a lady of means, and she spends all she has on the poor as soon as she gets it. Two days before Mr. B. wrote to me, she had committed herself to an outlay of £3 on providing a restaurant meal for a poor women's outing.

¹ *God in the Everyday*, p. 109.

Two friends promised to give her the money, and by one the promise was kept. But on Sunday evening the other backed out, on conscientious grounds, feeling that it was wasteful and wrong to spend so much on women who, coming from the slums, could not be expected to appreciate a restaurant menu. (Don't get hot; it was done in good faith and was not, perhaps, easy to do. So forget it, and remember instead that just about then Mr. B. sat himself down and wrote me his letter.)

Miss A., in no mind to cancel her plans, had now to raise thirty shillings by lunch-time on Tuesday, the day of the outing. When tea-time came on Monday she had not succeeded. She then went to call on a moneyed lady who lived five miles away, and, not possessing the bus fare, she walked all five of them. After an interview lasting two minutes she walked them again, because the lady was awfully sorry she could not help.

She reached home in a state of exhaustion, too tired and downhearted to eat any supper. She tried to pray, but could not collect her thoughts. She went to bed, but could not sleep; reached for a book, but could not read. And then, as she says, an "inner voice" spoke to her. "Can't you trust Me?" it seemed to say.

She rose from her bed and, in tears, fell on her knees at its side. "Forgive me, Lord," she said. "I will trust You. You know that I want the money for Your poor people, and I'm going to believe that You will send it." At that all her worry fled. She went back to bed and slept at once, but before she did so, she glanced at her watch and saw that it was 11.15. My letter was there in the morning, with the timed postmark to remind her of it.

The more one considers this remarkable chain of happenings (skein would perhaps be a better word) the more one can find to learn from it. It is first of all a very substantial piece of evidence. I do not see how any

reasonable person can avoid the conclusion that behind it there is a directing Intelligence, and more than that, a loving Intelligence. Those to be helped were humble people and their need (save to them) was small. Is some great cause in danger of foundering? The silver is Mine and the gold is Mine, saith the Lord of Hosts; let the treasury of Heaven be opened. But it is love, rather than omnipotence, which sees, with such care for detail, that a coachload of poor women shall not be done out of their treat.

One has a momentary vision; the Lord in His temple, high and lifted up, with the seraphim standing above His throne, and the whole earth full of His glory. Can it be a matter of moment to Him that some of His children here below are in need of thirty shillings? Are there those among the shining train who make report in a certain affair of conscience? Who shall deny the possibility, when Heaven is still paying interest on a poor widow's mites? At its weakest point a chain has broken; let it then be repaired. Thirty shillings! Thirty shillings! "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Why, see, here is Mr. B., with thirty shillings to give, and behold he prayeth. He doesn't know Miss A.? No matter, he knows of another; who is a friend of hers; let that other be told of her need. And this time all the links hold—but how easily any of them might have failed.

If I tell the story that follows, it is partly because it has a moral of its own, but more because I hope it may come to the notice of another link, known to me only as "M.T.M.," of Morecambe.

On February 2, 1937, I had a letter from the society steward of a Methodist church in Shropshire, who had come upon a case of dire distress, and had felt led, he assured me, to ask if I could give any help. There are few days in the week which do not bring similar requests, and in dealing with them I, too, have need to be led. As

I read the letter (whose writer I did not know) the prompting came clearly, "Send this man £5."

Now this struck me as strange, if not unreasonable. It happened that on the previous evening I had had my pocket picked in an Underground train, and so had lost all my available money, except for a few odd shillings. There was a pound or two in the little fund financed by occasional gifts from friends, but there would be other calls for certain, and how was I to know if this case was genuine? "Write him a cheque for £5," came the prompting again. I am rather ashamed when I remember how long I hesitated, but at length the cheque was sent. It reached its destination on February 3, and "M.T.M.," of Morecambe, who knew nothing whatever about it, posted it back to me the same evening, or at any rate sent me £5 in notes, "for a case of need," which arrived on the morning of February 4.

I have never been able to tell "M.T.M." the story, because I don't know who he (or she) is. And he (or she), for that matter, can know little about me, which brings us to the moral. The Morecambe letter was addressed to me vaguely as "Journalist, Fleet Street," but the G.P.O. sorter (a stout fellow, with a good taste, I fancy, in newspapers) filled in the necessary particulars. It was a pity he could not pass them on to "M.T.M.," who invited me, in a postscript, to acknowledge the gift in the "personal" column of a deplorable rival. It cost me sixteen shillings to comply, and I choose to regard it as a fine, well earned, for hesitation.

In both the foregoing cases, it will be observed, the sums I received were exactly the sums that were needed.

It is repeatedly established that one person's impulse coincides with another's prayer or special need. Take a few cases at random.

On a Sunday when he had promised to speak at a slum

post meeting in Bermondsey, Big Brother received an unlooked-for present. One of his office colleagues (who did not know of the promise) gave him a pair of his own son's boots, "because he had a feeling that they might be useful." He tucked the parcel under his arm, and made a joke of it when he met his Bermondsey friends coming in through the slush of winter from their meeting in the open air. But the captain had been expecting it. A boy had come to her Sunday school that afternoon with his stockingless feet an agony of broken chilblains, and because she cried at the sight of them, yet had no boots to give him, she prayed that some might be sent. For the benefit of those who hold out for precision, the boots were of the right size.

There was to be a prayer meeting for officers at one of the London posts, followed by the ordinary week-night service, and Big Brother had promised to go if his office duties permitted, but since this was uncertain, no definite plans were made. That morning, however, the word came suddenly to him—again to be precise, it came while he was shaving—"You will speak to-night on the first twelve verses of the 139th Psalm." It was such a clear command that he took a leaf of paper, wrote on it the name of the post and the words "Psalm cxxxix. 1-12," and slipped it into his Bible. He had a strenuous day, but the incident recurred to his mind at lunch-time, and then he saw that the passage might be arrestingly illustrated were he to tell the story of the ordeal through which one of his own friends was passing. The prayer-meeting was well under way when he arrived, and there was no break or discussion before the public meeting began; during the singing of a hymn, however, he was asked to read from Scripture. The officer-in-charge had a special reading to suggest, but before doing so, asked him if any particular portion had occurred to him. He produced his slip of paper, whereupon she, in astonishment, did likewise. Earlier in the

day she had been similarly impressed with the importance of Psalm cxxxix, verses 1 to 10 (note a slight difference), and had made a similar memorandum.

Here were two people, as she told her congregation, who had held no sort of communication, but had independently come to the meeting *with written instructions to deliver a message based on the first part of the 139th Psalm*. There must be somebody present for whom the message was intended. There was. He was a lame coster, sitting in the very back row, and he was badly up against it. Big Brother had never seen the man before, but the story with which he illustrated his reading was so exactly suited to his troubles that the night was, in truth, made light about him. Deeply impressed, he asked to be helped to the front, where he prayed for himself and, in broken words, professed conversion.

At another London post, the captain and her two lieutenants were called on in emergency to find immediate shelter for a family of young children whose home had come to shipwreck. They succeeded in placing all but the youngest, a boy of four, whom nobody wanted. Unable to bear the thought of sending him to the Poor Law institution, they took him into their quarters, which happens to be contrary to regulations; and because their sin was bound to find them out, "the Colonel" called that very afternoon. The Colonel, otherwise the Slum Secretary, held that the broken regulations would have to be repaired—but not until to-morrow: meantime they would ask God to solve the problem and save Teddy from the poor-house.

The Colonel opened the second of her letters, next morning in her office, and said a "hallelujah!" Two retired officers, somewhere in Northamptonshire, had written that, having no child of their own, they wanted to adopt one, and that their preference would be for a boy about four years old.

Teddy is with them, doing well, and he went of his own free choice, after this fashion. His foster-mother, before they had seen each other, was asked to come to London, and sat in a room with a number of other people. At a given moment Teddy came in, holding the hand of the young slum captain. He stood surveying them all, a little child in the midst, and then made a dive for his pocket, from which he extracted a paper bag, small and exceedingly sticky. With a sweet in his outstretched fingers, he gurgled with laughter and ran direct to the woman who waited to love him. It was the judgment of Paris.

A new post was about to be opened, and there were urgent reasons against delay, but much remained to be done in the way of renovation, and pending the completion of certain legal formalities, there was neither the money to pay for the work, nor the authority to say it must be carried out. The Colonel followed her usual course in all such dilemmas: she prayed for help to be sent, and, trusting completely, made herself responsible. Returning to her office she found a gentleman awaiting her with a cheque for £100, of which he had felt that she stood in need.

Nothing was more convincing to Big Brother than the manner in which financial needs were met. He and the Colonel discussed one morning the cost of work in the hop-fields and a sum of £150 was mentioned. That day a lady wrote to him for an appointment, and at the resulting interview made him a gift of a diamond and platinum wrist-watch valued at exactly that amount, with a request that the proceeds of its sale might be used for hop-field work.

Another watch was given him which, because of the donor's circumstances, he felt it wrong to accept, though it happened that he greatly needed the three or four pounds it was worth. He returned the gift, and ten minutes later was handed a letter from North Wales, with

a cheque inside it for thrice what he had forgone.

These examples might easily be multiplied a hundred-fold, and not, of course, from the records of the Salvation Army alone. Wherever the work of the Kingdom is carried on in faith, its upkeep is guaranteed by the Divine Exchequer. The sureness with which the process operates almost suggests a Heavenly clearing-house, receiving gifts and hearing petitions, and matching one against the other.

Here is a case of the "instinctive" impulse. An officer in a big northern city was struck by the gait of a woman in the street. It had a peculiar quality of hopelessness about it: she felt that she must keep the woman under observation. She followed her to the river bank, and there prevented a suicide. It was quite a common story—an invalid husband, unemployment, destitution, five children to be fed and clothed, despair. Now the home is a new place, the father and mother converted, and the children attending the Army meetings.



THE CONSEQUENCE OF NEGLECT

If God guides us through prayer, it follows that a neglect of prayer will result in a loss of the sense of guidance. This seems so trite as to be scarcely worth saying, yet many people who seldom or never pray complain that God seems indifferent or unheeding. The results of a neglect of prayer are dealt with by Professor O. Hallesby in this passage from his book, Prayer.

When prayer is neglected, results which are fatal to spiritual life follow, not immediately, but no less certainly. First, our minds become worldly, and we feel more and more alienated from God, and therefore have less and less about which to speak with Him. Then we develop an

unwilling spirit, which always finds pretexts for not praying, and excuses for having neglected prayer.

Our inner life begins to weaken. The pain of living in sin is not felt as keenly as before, because sin is no longer honestly confessed before God. As a result of this again, our spiritual vision becomes blurred, and we can no longer distinguish clearly between that which is sin and that which is not. From now on we resist sin in essentially the same way as worldly people do. They struggle against those sins only which are exceedingly dangerous from the standpoint of their consequences.

But such people have no desire to lose their reputation as Christians. For this reason they try to hide the worldliness of their minds as long as possible. In conversation, as well as in the prayer meeting, they are tempted to use language which is not in harmony with their inner selves. Empty words and affectation now seek to strangle what little prayer life is left in their hearts.

All this and a great deal more is the result of an impaired prayer life. And this is just what has taken place in the lives of many believers.

*

THE REMEDY FOR ANXIETY

And here to conclude with is a passage in which the Dean of St. Paul's discusses the problem of anxiety in the modern world, and the way of deliverance which can be found when we are willing to accept the Divine guidance. It is taken from his book, Seven Words.

According to the tradition followed by St. Luke, the final word of Jesus on the Cross was a quotation from Psalm xxxi., most appropriate at the point of death, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." Prob-

ably this corresponds to the "loud cry" which St. Mark tells us marked the moment of death.

We cannot know what vision and assurance were present to the mind of the Saviour at the final moment. Did He see clearly the way in which the triumph over death and defeat was to be manifested? Did He have clear knowledge of the coming Resurrection and pierce beyond the darkness of Good Friday to Easter dawn? Or were the details still hidden from Him while He remained among the children of men, even at this last moment? We cannot tell and we need not speculate. The one thing which we are told is sufficient—that, at the end, the Redeemer had the assurance that God was not defeated, and that somehow the work was finished and the sacrifice complete. After pain, tumult, and doubt, there comes again unbroken communion with the Father and unclouded trust in the power and love of the Eternal.

As with all the other Words, we may find in this a light upon one of our problems of the life of every day. It is a word for those who are harassed by anxiety. The problem of the anxious mind is a prominent one to-day. The psychologist has discovered, what was known already to most people who have to minister to a flock of ordinary folk, that a multitude of men and women are maimed in their lives and prevented from attaining their full development because of a haunting fear. Sometimes this fear is concentrated upon one particular object, such as disease or poverty; but often it has no special object and takes the more malignant form of a vague but potent suspicion about the world. There are many who go through life like a man walking through a dark city, expecting that each corner may conceal an assassin. They expect that life will "let them down."

It is perhaps curious that our present age should suffer more from the "anxiety complex" than others, for, compared with most other periods, life in civilized countries

to-day is more secure, and the remedies for evil are more numerous and more readily available. In an age which would have been regarded by the men of the Middle Ages as one of undreamt-of order and settled existence, we suffer more than those who passed their days in alarms and insecurity.

The reason for this is not very easy to discover. In part, the greater complexity of life in civilized societies may be to blame. The demands which are made on us are so many, and change so frequently, that there is an exhaustion of mental and nervous energy. A great deal of the vague anxiety which is felt by people who are quite sane is the unconscious or half-conscious question, Shall I be equal to the requirements of life? Am I really fit to cope with the emergencies which may arise? Psychology also seems to show that the anxiety state is frequently connected with some disorder of the instinctive life—a "repression," which, unknown to its victim, exercises its paralysing influence on his energies. A great psychologist has said, "The greatest fear of civilized man is himself." This is not far from the truth. In various ways we are anxious because we fear our own inadequacy.

A strange fact has to be recognized—that religion very frequently, so far from alleviating anxiety, seems at least to increase it. There are well-known types of religious persons in whom belief in God appears to be the source of additional timorousness. The scrupulous individual is an instance. To him every act is a possible source of sin, and he spends much of his time wondering whether this or that deed was sinful; in extreme cases such people are reduced almost to inertia. In another form, the anxiety state attaches itself to religion by connecting itself with the thought of eternal punishment and the unforgivable sin. Dwelling on the thought of the Divine avenger of evil is the open road for many to religious mania.

It is obvious that the anxiety state is the deadliest

enemy of human progress, mental and spiritual. The man haunted by ghosts of his own imagining cannot play his part in the world: his evil dreams inhibit him. And the religious spirit is condemned to sterility in the same way. There can be no joyful service of God if we are paralysed by fear of Him. Jesus insists on the danger of anxiety more than once, in emphatic terms. Anxiety about the morrow is not a proper state of mind for those who belong to the Kingdom, and the cares of this world would hinder the development of the good seed of the Gospel.

There are two antidotes for anxiety—knowledge of oneself and faith in God. The first is important, because, if it is true that man's chief object of fear is himself, it is necessary that he should look the object in the face. Many things are feared only so long as they are unknown, and, if the root of our anxiety is the dread of our own inadequacy, we do well to find out, as precisely as possible, how far our inadequacy extends, and in what it consists. That, at least, is the first step towards doing anything about it.

The need to know ourselves is, of course, the constant theme of religious teachers as well as of psychologists, but it is not an easy matter. We are constantly in danger of unreality. The self-examination which is conducted from the standpoint of psychology is often biassed by the theories which we have adopted beforehand. We have probably known people who have looked eagerly within themselves for an "Œdipus complex," and would have been disappointed if they had not found one. Of course they were not disappointed—they had made up their minds beforehand what they were going to find.

But religious self-examination may be equally self-deceptive. Here too the thought of what we ought to find influences our finding. Some versions of Christianity have taught that the soul of man is, by nature, totally corrupt and depraved, and those who have been brought up in that

tradition tend to find themselves to be a "mass of perdition." But among those who have not such gloomy religious beliefs there is often a feeling that we ought to find ourselves very bad, that we are not truly religious unless we are overwhelmed by our vileness. One of the chief things needed for a revival of religion to-day is to bring it back to reality, which means infusing it with the spirit of truth. We ought to want to know the exact truth about ourselves, for only the truth, and not either self-complacency or self-contempt, will make us free. We are not monsters of iniquity, though we are sinners. We are not without real good within ourselves and, still more, possibilities of good. We need to see ourselves as we are, biassed neither by theological ideas nor by self-confidence.

The wiser psychologist would admit that analysis alone is often unable to exorcise the demon of anxiety. Self-knowledge, and a true estimate of our own powers and circumstances, may not be enough. This is not surprising, for the obvious truth remains that, when we know all that can be known, we may still have very good grounds for anxiety. The result of analysis may be to confirm the suspicion that we are inadequate for the tasks which life places on us. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine the kind of person who could know that he was adequate. To feel anxiety is not necessarily unreasonable, and possibly the more we know, the more anxiety we may reasonably feel.

The belief in God comes here as the only final cure for anxiety. Our Lord dwells on this as the ground of confidence—your Heavenly Father careth for you. The root cause of our anxiety is the feeling of our own inadequacy; belief in God does not take away this feeling, or assure us that we are really adequate. It may even intensify our sense of our weakness; but it brings us the assurance that our inadequacy does not matter. The adequacy of God for every vicissitude is the solvent of the anxiety complex. If I believe in God, I can rest upon Him.

Whether we can rest upon Him or not depends on whether we believe rightly about Him. As we have seen, there are many people for whom belief in God brings added anxiety. That is because they have never risen to the full meaning of the Christian belief in God. They are still perplexing themselves with lower ideas about Him. If we think of Him as a great schoolmaster, or an irresponsible tyrant, we may well feel anxious. If God, for example, cares whether we are fasting when we partake of the Lord's Supper, or prefers to be prayed to in one kind of costume rather than another, we may well feel anxious, because we could never be sure of fulfilling the arbitrary rules of an unreasonable Deity. But the Christian revelation of God is intended to free us from that kind of superstition, to help us to believe that God is really wisdom and love, and looks not on the outward appearance but on the heart, seeking everywhere those who worship Him in spirit and in truth. The God in whom Christians believe is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The great antidote to anxiety is faith in God, by which we can say every day, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," and to know that "underneath are the everlasting arms." But we ought to try to clear our thoughts on the meaning of God's Providence, for otherwise we may fall into errors which will deprive us of the full comfort of our faith. Some have thought that every event was directly willed by God, and that His Providence was the real cause of everything which happened to them. In this way men have come to doubt the goodness of God, when they thought of Him not only as the source of good, but the source of disease, sin and pain. We need not believe any such thing. Our Lord never thought that evil was God's will. He tells us indeed that no sparrow falls to the ground without the Heavenly Father, but He does not say that He wills even that little tragedy.

The origin of evil is a mystery into which we cannot

enter here. The faith which banishes anxiety is not concerned with how evil began, but how evil is to be overcome. For the purpose of living it is of little importance to me to know how sin and death came to be in the world; but it is of immense importance to me to be able to deal with them in my own experience. I need a Gospel which will prevent me from being paralysed by terror at the dark side of existence and give me strength of spirit to triumph over it.

This is what the Christian faith in God can do. There can be no dark place in which God will not be present with me, and no circumstance in which He has not a work for me to do, and a power to help me to do it. I can give myself a holiday from anxiety. I am not the captain on the bridge—there is Another who will take charge and bring me to the haven where I would be.

The belief that God cares for us and is our Father, inevitably leads us to the thought of His guidance. We escape anxiety when we have God for our guide. Recently there has been some discussion of guidance in connection with an interesting religious movement. We must be grateful to "the Groups" for reviving among us this essential belief of vital religion, which has been too little regarded. When a forgotten or neglected truth is rediscovered, there is always the danger that it will be exaggerated or believed in a one-sided way; and this belief in guidance has, in some cases, been interpreted in a questionable manner. There are people who seem to think that they can find the guidance of God by emptying their minds of all thought and noticing the first idea which comes into their head. They appear to think that the employment of our reason has nothing to do with the guidance of God.

There is no ground in the teaching of the New Testament for this notion. The guidance of God was certainly given in full measure to Jesus, but we find that

He meditated upon the Old Testament and thought upon the meaning of the Kingdom in order to understand God's will. We ought not to suppose that what our reason can give us is purely human, and what comes to us apparently apart from reason Divine. How then can we find the guidance of God? The first and fundamental requirement is that we should be willing to be guided by God. There is no promise of guidance to those who have not surrendered themselves. There cannot be two captains on the bridge. Only in so far as we have a sincere desire to do God's will is the will revealed to us. But when that initial step has been taken, we have to employ our faculties of judgment, and consider the circumstances with prudence. They are the same powers of mind which we used before we were converted, but now they have been consecrated by the new purpose towards which we direct them. Whereas before we employed them for the ends of our selfish desires, now they are used for the wider purposes of the Kingdom of God. The condition of guidance is not reason suspended, but reason enlightened and consecrated.

Nevertheless, there are times when the guidance of God seems to be given without the normal process of making up our minds. Sometimes the thought of what God wills us to do comes with a power of conviction which cannot be shaken, when we are simply waiting and not thinking. We must not venture to deny that God's direction is given in divers manners. But even in these cases probably the conviction is the result of previous thinking which, while it was conscious, was inconclusive, but now, in quiet contemplation, comes to a point. If we seek guidance we should wait upon God, ready to hear what He will say. But in the end we have to judge all things by our reason and conscience, purged of the illusions of self-seeking.

No one who contemplates with open eyes the Passion

of Jesus will be easily captivated by the belief that pain and evil are unreal. Christian Scientists have interpreted the Reality of God as if it implied the complete unreality of suffering and sin, and have argued that we should regard them as merely illusions of the "mortal mind." This is a drastic method of dealing with the problem of anxiety, by denying that the causes of anxiety exist. But the conquest of the Cross is not over chimeras, but over real evils. The sin which brought the Saviour to Calvary, and the pain which He endured, were actual parts of the real world. The faith in God and His guidance which we learn from Christ is not a pretending that the causes of anxiety do not exist, but a conviction that the power is available to deal with them and to make out of them good.

"Into thy hands I commend my spirit." The words are both a consolation and a warning. Who has the right to use them? They are often employed by men who have no right to them. The Christian faith in God is taken to mean that God is a "good fellow" and will make it all right for us in the end whatever we do. The New Testament does not support any such idea. All things work together for good to them that love God. The restful trust in the Father is only open to those who have done and are doing the Father's will. Those who are completing the work of God have the authority to say "Into thy hands."

CHAPTER FOUR

THE GIFT OF MORAL POWER

PERHAPS the most striking answer to prayer is found in the moral and spiritual change it can effect in people who pray. Even people whose conception of God has been dim or uncertain have recognized the spiritual benefits of prayer. "Who rises from his knees a better man, his prayer is answered," said George Meredith. And Tyndall the scientist who made many attacks upon the beliefs held in his day as to the power of prayer said, "It is not my habit of mind to think otherwise than solemnly of the feelings which prompt prayer. Often unreasonable, even contemptible, in its purer forms, prayer hints at disciplines which few of us can neglect without moral loss."

Countless testimonies have been offered to the power of prayer to effect inward transformation, and in a companion volume to the present book (*By the Grace of God*) many modern testimonies of that sort were collected together. As examples have also been given already in the present volume, we shall not devote much space to specific testimonies in this chapter, but pass on to consider what may be our own need, and how it can be met.

*

THE POWER TO FORGIVE

To begin with, here is a very lovely and moving record from the pen of C. F. Andrews, telling how his father, after being financially ruined by a false friend whom he

had trusted, was delivered from all bitterness as he lifted up his heart to God. It is taken from What I Owe to Christ.

My mother, on the occasion of her marriage, had a considerable income of her own, and we were therefore able to live in comfort all through the days when I was very young. Indeed, my father had been in a position to carry on his religious duties in the Church without taking any stipend from the congregation, because my mother's income from invested capital was ample for all our family needs. Her money was held under a trust deed, and one special trustee had been appointed to look after her property. Everything had been going on in this manner ever since I was born, and it seemed as though this comfortable lot would be ours as far as we could look forward into the future.

But one day a letter came to my father by the morning post warning him that this trustee had been speculating with my mother's money. My father sent different telegrams at once to London, inquiring direct about certain securities in order to find out whether my mother's money was still invested in them, as it ought to have been under the trust deed. One telegram after another came back during the course of the day to say that the amounts deposited in my mother's name had been withdrawn, and the last news of all came that the trustee had absconded. He had been speculating on the Stock Exchange with my mother's money as well as his own, and had lost it all. Indeed, it was afterwards discovered that for some years past he had been defaulting. All the while he had been regarded as a pillar of society, but in reality he had been living the life of a criminal.

I can even now see my father's anxious face during that terrible afternoon, and my mother trying to console him. She was bravest of all. My father was blaming himself,

because the trustee was his own dearest friend, whom he had advised to be appointed when the trust deed had been drawn up in favour of my mother as part of the marriage settlement. Not only was there in his own mind this miserable thought that he himself had proposed his friend as trustee and was responsible, but also the added suffering of his friend's terrible betrayal of friendship. It would be difficult to describe the agony he was in when the bad news came, and telegram after telegram was opened informing him of the same story of ruin. I clung to my mother and watched the desolation increasing, but I was still too young to understand what it all meant. Only the fact that my father's friend had robbed my mother of all her money became clear to me, and I wondered with a childish dread what my father would do. Then came the hour of evening worship, which was always observed in the family. My mother was brave and silent, and I was nestling beside her as my father read the psalm for that evening. It happened to be the psalm that was written by the Hebrew singer concerning a treacherous friend, and it contained the following verses:

“For it is not an open enemy, that hath done me this dishonour: for then I could have borne it:

But it was even thou, my companion, my guide and my own familiar friend.

We took sweet counsel together: and walked in the House of God as friends.”

Then my father paused. Some terrible verses follow in this old Scripture, calling down a curse upon the traitor, but my father never read those verses. Instead of that, he began at once to pray to God; and as he did so his voice broke with compassion for the friend who had done him such a terrible wrong. He prayed for his forgiveness and repentance. Indeed, as the prayer went on, he seemed to lose all sense of his own personal loss in his overflowing

love for his friend. When he rose from prayer his whole countenance was changed.

*

SUCH A MAN AS I

After such a record of human goodness and love as that to which we have just listened, it is natural to ask if we are living below our own spiritual possibilities. In the next two passages Dr. James Reid, in his own sincere and gracious way, puts this question before us.

Much of our life is lived in the light of some idea of ourselves, which for the moment holds the field in the mind. It may be a wrong idea, a foolish idea, the product of pride or of fancy, and our conduct at that point will become stupid and wrong.

The difficulty is to have a thought of ourselves which is true to all the facts, and which we can yet respect. For most of us the true picture of ourselves has many blotches. We cannot imagine Peter or Mary Magdalene finding much comfort or inspiration when they looked within and into the past. But there is a light in which we can see ourselves, and without either pride or priggishness or crippling shame.

We are all the children of God. That remains true whatever has happened. It may sound unreal; but just here the battle of the soul is being fought to-day. There are voices that tell us that we belong to the dust, and the only real difference between us and the animals is that we are able more intelligently to indulge our instincts. If that be so, the last defences against evil are down. Our question in that case will rather be, "Should such a man as I deny himself?" Perhaps we do not go that length in self-depreciation, writing down our own value to sell ourselves cheap to sin. But how many of us take ourselves

at something less than the valuation of Jesus, and live on that poor level! We give way to fear, or to worry, or to bad temper, or to selfish fighting for our own hand. What else can be expected of us? We are human; we have a difficult nature; a good deal to put up with. That is the kind of person we are. We have always been like that. So we argue, making excuses to an uneasy conscience. But suppose we are wrong? What if we are children of God, with the Father's care like a mantle round us waiting for us to rest in it? Must we be irritable, or peevish, or afraid? What, if deep down, we have the capacity to be brave, or unselfish, or patient; and the other things are just habits which, if we are really willing, God can enable us to break? What if God really loves us? Have we ever thought that out, and all that it might mean if we believed it?

It is also true that we are people with a certain influence on others. "No man liveth to himself." Someone is taking his cue from us, it may be unconsciously. We are putting something into the atmosphere which others must breathe. We may depress, or we may cheer. We have power to make life more difficult for others, or we may help them to bear some burden. If we grow slack, someone will give up the battle. But we can become for other people a centre of love or faith through which God's face will shine. We are the vital link in the chain that holds someone to God. Perhaps we wonder why there is not more of God's love in our home, for instance, or a better tone in the office. Somewhere the circuit is broken, and the light is out. May not the broken place be in our own life, just because we know Christ and are not letting Him fully in? We cannot get rid of responsibility or contract out of our influence. Thank God for it; that also is the kind of person we are.

Perhaps the thing we oftenest forget about ourselves is that we are people who have at our disposal the resources

of God. "My God shall supply all your need, according to His riches in Christ Jesus." Do you really believe it? Paul found that fact miraculously true. He lived on the level of the promises of God. He was always doing things that needed Him to bring them to pass. His mind dwelt in the sunlight of God's grace, not amid the choking fog of his own defeat and impotence.

That is the secret of Christ's tremendous demand upon us. He believed that we are able for hard things, for a clean life, for a stiff battle, for tasks that look impossible. He believed that the Father's fellowship is our true home—our natural environment. Our weakness comes from our refusal to believe it. The one thing needed to set God's power working is our dependence on Him. Should such as we flee from a difficulty when God is with us? Need we shrink from any duty when His power is at our disposal? Must we surrender to any temptation when there is victory for us in Him?

Nothing we have done or been need keep us from seeing ourselves in this light. For nothing we have been—no failure or betrayal of the best—can disinherit us of the grace of God, as no good we have done can merit it. We can find hope even in the pit of despair, if such be our position. For it is just there that God can take us in hand, if only we look up and let Christ kindle the faith by which He can rescue us.

*

STRAIN AND STRENGTH

The words recall to mind a scene of long ago. It was a students' meeting in Edinburgh addressed by Professor (now Sir) George Adam Smith. The college term had just begun. In front of the speaker were dozens of lads from country homes tasting the first joyous breath of responsi-

bility, yet with a dash of fear. The words were his text, and he caught its essence in an unforgettable phrase—"The strain will bring the strength." That was over thirty years ago. And one at least can bear witness that through many a new task, many a grave emergency, and sorrowful strain, the promise holds.

It is a great promise for the uncertain future. The heavier the burden, the stronger becomes the back to bear it. It has often happened so. "Necessity is the mother of invention." Our greatest discoveries have been made at the pinch of need. The finest natures have been developed by the task that touched into life a slumbering fire. Mrs. Bishop, the traveller, was an invalid; but the call would come and she would rise from her couch and go thousands of miles into the heart of China alone. Both in body and mind, we are told, we have power we never use because nothing has called it forth. There was no strain to bring the strength.

But is this always true? People talk a good deal to-day about feeling the strain. And we know the signs of it—the lined face, the weary eyes, the moody silences at home, the nerves like a tight bowstring, near to breaking-point. If this promise were true, and we lived on it, would there not be a peace and a poise which are often absent even in many Christian lives? For peace, as someone says, is "the conscious possession of adequate resources." Jesus bade us look at the wild flower pushing its way into the light through soil and sheath in effortless beauty. It is the picture of a life without conscious strain—the kind of life He bade us live. It was the quality of His own. Is it possible in this racking modern world? Can we really make this promise our own, and live upon it?

We can, on two conditions. The first is that we take our life from God, and seek in it His purpose. It was to people who were doing this more or less loyally that the promise was given. Without that background it is not

possible to get rid of strain. For when we probe into this feeling of strain we find it comes from some wrong adjustment to life, and to our task and burden. Tiredness—so we are told by the psychologists—begins in the mind. It is not really the weight of the burden that breaks us; it is the wrong relation to it. There is inward friction somewhere. Some grit has got into the machinery. It may be fear, or anxiety about results, or a secret sense that we are not really equal to our task. We work the more feverishly to conceal the fact, but it is there. Or is it that in our work, or whatever brings the burden, we are seeking the wrong thing—our own success, or the applause of others, or some comfort which may only make life too perilously easy? The only way to get rid of these is to take our life from God, to realize that whatever comes is within the orbit of His will, and to seek that first of all.

If we began there, life would be simplified. Most of us carry in our load a lot of useless lumber. A big part of the strain of life comes from shallow living; doing things to be in the swim or to keep pace with the crowd; pursuing plans that have no relation to God's purpose for us, and often bring needless fret. Taking life from God will change all that. It will fix our eyes upon the task which God gives us to do, whether it be managing a humble home or directing a great business. It will set us seeking one thing alone, wherever we may be—to do the will of God. For the rest, we shall cease to resent the inconvenient, or fear the unknown, or worry about results. The mind will be free for the immediate duty.

The other condition is utter dependence on God for the power. Dependence will bring confidence. It will release us from self-centred struggle. It will open the way for God; His power will rise within us like a secret spring released. Power does not reside in us; it flows through us from God when we are quiet enough to let Him work.

Faced in this confidence, the strain will bring the strength.

The secret is worth trying. Are we afraid of to-morrow? Is there some crisis we have to meet, some operation to face perhaps; or, what is harder, to stand by while someone we love goes through deep waters? Are we carrying a load in business that threatens to become too heavy? Is there someone needing our help, and, like the man in the parable, we have "nothing to set before him"? Let us lift up our hearts. "My strength is made perfect in your weakness."

We were not meant in ourselves to be equal to life. And the first step to power is to realize our helplessness. Perhaps the strain has come to open our eyes to the Strength.



DO WE REALLY WANT TO FIND GOD?

Often we fail to attain to spiritual transformation through prayer because, although we may put up petitions to God, our real desire does not back them. This will be considered again later. Here, however, Rev. Leslie Weatherhead uncovers for us the spiritual conflict that often stultifies our prayers for spiritual renewal, and then bears his testimony to the glorious possibilities that are open to us through prayer. The passage is taken from his book How Can I Find God?

Down through the centuries from one of the oldest dramas in the Bible, perhaps *the* oldest, comes that wistful cry of Job, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!"; and the cry is taken up by modern writers. G. K. Chesterton sings:

“So with the wan, waste grasses on my spear,
I ride forever seeking after God.
My hair grows whiter than my thistle plume
And all my limbs are loose; but in my eyes
The star of an unconquerable praise;
For in my soul one hope for ever sings,
That at the next white corner of the road
My eyes may look on Him.”

In the main, those who complain that they cannot find God—who say that prayer is unreal, that it seems like talking to nobody, that they never feel anyone is there, that their prayer lacks reality, and that the experiences they read and hear concerning others never happen to them—are perfectly sincere in their quest for God; but since God is what He is, the thing that is hindering them is on their side, not on God's, though exactly what that hindrance is may not be discernible by them, standing just where they are standing at present. For, though we ask the question, “How can I find God?”, a truer way of putting the question would be, “How can I put myself in the way of being found by Him?” If God is what Jesus taught, then the One who was likened by Jesus to a shepherd seeking his sheep on the mountains, “until he find it,” and to a woman seeking a coin, “until she find it,” is searching for us with a steadfastness of purpose that puts to shame our little quest, with its hot and sometimes tearful resentments at ill-success. God, if He be our loving Father, definitely feels a sense of incompleteness if we are not at home in Him and with Him. God, being what He is, is far more anxious to find us than we have ever been to find Him, and He will never rest until He brings us home.

There is therefore a preliminary question, “Do we really want to find Him?” since it is logical to argue that, if God is seeking us, and we, with our whole heart, are seeking Him, we shall be found by Him at once and brought into that delicious relationship of being at home

in our Father's world, which accounts for so much of the joy, serenity and strength manifested in the life of Jesus.

"With our whole heart"—these are the words which contain the difficulty, and that is perhaps the reason why, for some of us at any rate, the quest for God seems barren and fruitless and God seems to have withdrawn Himself to a distant heaven. "If *with all your hearts* ye truly seek Me ye shall ever surely find Me." The truth is that we want Him and do not want Him, and there is a conflict in our minds which defeats our quest and spoils our experience. Let us look at this conflict very closely.

We want Him. We have read some of the lives of the saints; and when we have made every allowance for the fact that some of them were undoubtedly neurotics, some were mystics, some were visionaries, and it may be said that their outlook on life was abnormal, yet many of them had a sense of the presence of God which was convincing to them and in every way satisfying; and we cannot dismiss the experience of the saints in all ages as mental disease, for it is more wholesome, satisfying and attractive than our health. We have had our little moments when a sense of presence has fallen upon us, but Brother Lawrence could truly say that he was as conscious of the presence of God when among the pots and pans of his kitchen as when he was on his knees before the Blessed Sacrament. Hymn-writers can use phrases which make us hunger for the experience about which they write, and some of our friends tell us about experiences that we would give almost anything to have. These experiences of others make us truly long for God.

Then there are times of loneliness and need and sorrow, when no human friend can enter into our heart, and when our whole nature cries out for the comfort and strength which it believes God can bring. No preacher who is really in touch with people, and who has achieved any skill in the art of reading faces, could look down from a

pulpit without being deeply impressed by the kind of spiritual hunger which people's faces express. And if he is in sympathy at all he is bound to be deeply moved by the amazing courage of men and women. Many of them are carrying heavy burdens and going through the darkest valleys. Some are troubled as to how in the world they are going to make both ends meet. Some are in deep distress over husband or wife or child. Some are bearing a loneliness which is almost a physical pain. Yet, for the most part, men and women put on a bright face and bear their troubles in an uncomplaining silence; and only when they relax, as they do in Church, can it be seen that some are almost at the end of their strength—tired in heart and brain and body, wondering if they will really get through another week, and almost desperate to find God. So much so that the preacher, if they only knew it, is almost as desperate, with a longing to give them the sense of God which has come to himself, which he knows would buoy up their spirits, steady their nerves, be a tonic to their minds, and send them forth with radiant face and renewed strength, feeling that because God was with them, nothing in heaven or earth or hell could down them. Yes, there is not the slightest doubt that we want God. We simply must have Him or break down.

But there is another side to the picture and we must be brave enough to face both sides of our conflict. Many of us want God much as we want a hot-water bottle at night—a little temporary comfort, which would just bring us through a trying hour and then could be pushed away by other things within the self. We cannot play fast and loose with God like that. I have been reading, for the stiffening of my own spine, some of the experiences of God that men of olden days had. You will remember that if you touched the Ark in the days of the old Covenant, you were a dead man. If you touched the mountain in which, in terror and power, He was supposed to dwell, it was

instant death. We must remember, when we talk so glibly about direct access to God, that only once a year, after tremendous preparation and prolonged self-discipline, did the High Priest enter into the Holy of Holies. We need to recover the Jewish sense of the majesty of God. "In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord, high and lifted up, and His train filled the Temple, and one cried unto another and said: 'Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts. The whole earth is full of His glory.' Then said I, 'Woe is me for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips.'"

God must not be thought of as a beneficent fairy god-mother who, by the turning of a ring, can be brought to our aid to turn our dusty rubbish heaps into gold and our hovels into fairy palaces. Nor must we treat Him as a kind of Harrods at which we ask for things and then lose faith in the business because what we ask for is not sent up by dinner-time. Nor must we bargain with Him as Jacob did: "If God will bless me and keep me in the way that I go and give me bread to eat and raiment to wear so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God." We must, in a word, want Him with our whole mind, and want Him for His own sake, and not for what we can get out of Him—not even the undoubtedly *good* things we want from Him.

As I said, there is the difficulty—"Want Him with our whole mind." We talk, too glibly sometimes, about the presence of God. If we were pure we might stand before Him and bear the glory of His presence. But if the splendour of His glory really did break upon us, if He answered the prayer we so often pray, "Show us Thy face," should we not be like those who called on the mountains to cover them and the hills to fall on them? Should we not wrap the rags of our self-righteousness round us and run from Him? For if we are going to face the question, "Do we really want to find Him?" does the

answer not depend on this very question—"Do I really love my sins, my compromises, my fears, better than him?" We want Him now, perhaps at the moment, or in some lonely desolate hour, or even, as in the case of many people, when they are bursting with health and good spirits; but in the hour when the pulses of nobleness are slow, when low temptations possess us, when some unclean lust sweeps through us like a burning fire, or when we are so afraid of what people would say or think if we stood out for what we know to be right—in such moments, do we really want Him? Or do we not want far more the very things He hates?

So we find ourselves in the grip of this terrible conflict. We want Him and we do not want Him. We want His way and we want our own way. We want to be made clean, but there is still a hunger for the husks that the swine eat. We want to do His will, but our will chokes our desire. We would see His Kingdom come, but we give our vote in another direction. We would follow Christ, but we do not want to do so openly lest our friends should think we are queer. We need forgiveness, but are too proud to let God forgive us. So we are held in the grip of our conflict and we are trying to live in two worlds.

Now that attempt to live in two worlds at once spoils the chance of our full experience of God and wrecks the life of our soul. You cannot be happy in either world if you are trying to live in both. If you are living wholly in God's world, wanting only Him, seeking with your whole strength His way, then life has a radiant, exultant experience. Everything speaks to you of God and nothing has power to drag you down because it cannot spoil your relationship. If you are living wholly in the world of sense and self in which the soul is lulled to sleep, you have at any rate such happiness as the entirely selfish life can bring. But many of us, between two worlds, settle down to what we call a compromise, but which is a danger-

ous psychological conflict which takes full toll of our nervous poise. We will serve in His Church, support its finances, argue for its intellectual position, or hide in any other dug-out which happens to be in our section of the line. We tell ourselves that the experiences of others are not for us. The real truth is that consciously or unconsciously we are evading God. We *must* be doing so if He seeks us and yet we are not found of Him.

I believe God has an experience for us which is greater and more splendid than anything we have ever known. I believe He throws open the gates of a new world to us which is sheer wonder and delight. I believe we can live in a world where His presence is the very atmosphere we breathe and where almost everything we touch reminds us of Him; but I believe we must be ready to give up our sins and fears and compromises, and go with Him as He calls us. At first it will be a discipline, but we must let Him burn sin and self out of us. The glory of His presence will be surgical at first, but Christ and all the saints and apostles beckon us on and their lives give a triumphant "Yes" to the question, "Is it really worth it?" And when we ask the question, "How can I find God?" we must answer these other questions first—"Do I really want to find Him? Am I prepared to leave the things that, like a dreadful cloud, come in between my soul and Him?"

We must desire Him more than we desire anything else in the world; and if He puts His finger on this and that and says, "These things must go first," He will give us the courage to cut them out entirely. He will help us to pray sincerely, "What wilt Thou have me to do?" and then give us grace, so that whatsoever He says unto us we may do it.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF DESIRE

The negative aspect of spiritual renewal is the deliverance from the tyranny of evil habits, and the cleansing of the springs of desire. Tolstoi, for instance, said that when he trusted God, he ceased to desire the things that hitherto had attracted him. . . . In this passage Rev. Joe Brice expounds what is the essential Christian faith and experience regarding inward cleansing, and how this is to be realized through prayer. It is from his book Pentecost.

It was a revelation which came to the disciples of Jesus at Pentecost: the revelation of the Eternal Light, in which they first discovered their own unfitness for communion and their incapacity for service. It was a vision of judgment in grace and of grace in judgment. The Love of the Father was first a flame of Light piercing to the very secrets of the heart. It showed them all their heart, the depth of inbred sin, the subtle strength of unbelief, the pride that lurked within. It was a new and deep revealing of heart-depravity and the need for cleansing. This vision was the preface to Pentecost. In its light the old prayer found new meaning, "Create within me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." They had been with Jesus when He traced the requirements of the Law to the motives of the heart, but they had not learned the lesson. The idea of sin's inmost infection, like the prospect of heart-purity, was actually new to them. Now they knew that the heart, as the seat of those principles of action, intellectual and volitional, which determine a man's disposition and order his character, must be clean before the outward life may be correct. Out of it are the issues of life. The events of a man's behaviour are the symptoms of his inner character. In its vital nature

sin is a "pathological condition of the soul." Wherefore they must seek and gain heart-purity.

Where the desire to attain communion with the Father and to hasten the coming of the Kingdom of Christ upon the earth has been born, defilement of heart becomes intolerable. A man who has seen the Eternal Light and envisaged the redemptive purpose of God can no longer acquiesce in the presence of sin in his life. But it is the painful fact that the forgiven Christian often has to own the presence within himself of unchristlike qualities and forces. Even though he has consciously and consistently reshaped the ambitions, aims and desires of his own life, and has really transformed all his values in line with the will of Christ, there still linger in the depth of his being, hidden from social censure but none the less effective, certain elements, like resentment, malice and infidelity, which have never yielded to the new direction of his conscious life. There are intractable elements, treacherous elements—the problems of the divided will and alienated affections.

The literature of sanctity is full of the lament over unsubdued lusts. Even after the Lord had so graciously delivered him and set him down in the faith of the Gospel, and given him such blessed evidence of his interest in divine grace, Bunyan says, "The tempter came upon me again more grievously than ever, and I hoped that Christ had yet a word of grace and mercy for me."

It was this same experience of inward sin subsisting with the graces of Christian character which made Wesley cry,

"Oh for a heart to praise my God!
A heart from sin set free;
A heart that always feels Thy blood
So freely shed for me.

A heart in every thought renewed
And full of love divine,
Perfect and right and pure and good,
A copy, Lord, of Thine! "

The same inner conflict led Frances Ridley Havergal, even after the gifts and visions expressed in her earlier hymns, to bewail her spiritual insecurity—"No one professing to be a Christian at all could possibly have had a more clouded, fearing, doubting, sinning and wandering heart-history than mine. . . . Oh, to be filled with the Spirit! Oh, that He would purify me at any cost! "

Through the vision of Calvary which came to him in the Methodist Chapel at Colchester, Spurgeon felt "an emancipated soul, an heir of heaven, forgiven, accepted in Christ, plucked from the miry clay, his feet set upon a rock and his going established." Even so, he set it on record within a few weeks of this event that certain follies had begun to sprout again. ". . . My soul seems to long after the fleshpots of Egypt, and that after eating heavenly manna. Help and forgive me, O my Saviour."

It is this painful consciousness of inward conflict through the persistence of elements of treachery within that promotes the passionate prayer for cleansing. Repression fails; the disease finds vent. The soul needs an inward cleansing, a cleansing that will purge

" . . . the secret springs,
The motives that control;
The chambers where polluted things
Hold empire o'er the soul."

Wherefore the believer cries, "Create within me a clean heart." Can it ever be?

Pentecost is the answer to this poignant problem of the Christian heart. "God which knoweth the heart . . . gave them the Holy Spirit . . . purifying their hearts by

faith." The Holy Spirit came to cleanse. . . . Live coals from off the altar fell upon that Upper Room company in a blessed ministry of purifying. The Holy Spirit of Love, interpenetrating their spirits, purified, sweetened and transformed the springs of their being. The source was purified, the inmost nature cleansed, the conflict resolved into the unity of utter devotion; and so the outward life was sanctified. Their souls were pervaded and purified by Perfect Love from all that was unlovely and unloving. After this work of grace, as Wesley put it, "No wrong temper, none contrary to love remains in the soul. . . . Fear and sin and grief expire, cast out by perfect love." The Methodist definition was verified at Pentecost.

The words used to denote this cleansing are among the clearest and most interesting in the New Testament. Sometimes the verb "to cleanse" which is used in this connection is that also used for the purging of the loathsome infection of leprosy. When Jesus dealt with the leper (Luke v. 12-13), the plague-spot was removed "and immediately the leprosy departed from him" This is the word that is used for the cleansing from sin. The same word is significantly used in secular writings to denote the purging from an army of its sick and ineffective, its mercenaries and cowards, so that only the flower of the army is left. The import of the word as used for the cleansing of the heart is that every unchristlike sentiment, every element of treachery, every impulse to deliberate sin, the deep-seated virus of lust are done away.

There is cleansing, not merely from the deep defilement of carnal desire, but from the subtler forms of selfishness, from hidden as well as obvious faults. There is an obscure region of the mind below the level of conscious thought, another mind, which is partly repressed by the exercise of reason and often carries a different morality from that which the conscious mind practises, a region in which there dwell darksome impressions, longings and impulses.

It was of these the Psalmist prayed, "Cleanse Thou me from hidden faults." He did not know modern psychology, but he knew the power of hidden evil to pollute the springs of life. Self-will and pride have secret strategies which are just as harmful, perhaps more harmful, than those tactics of self which are openly known and expressed. From these also, if the New Testament vocabulary is to be taken at face value, there is deliverance and cleansing.

The state of the cleansed is variously described. Paul prays that his Philippian converts "may be sincere without offence till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness" (Phil. i. 9-11). The word "sincere" means "without fake." Old dealers practised well-known tricks: a cheap or cracked vessel was faked with wax to look perfect and then shown to a likely customer in a dark corner. The scrutiny must not be too close. A Christian life might be under the same necessity. Paul desires that the Philippians may be "found pure and without fake or alloy when examined in the sunlight"; complete and crystal clear, no dross, no fake, no falsehood, no duplicity, no hypocrisy, no foreign admixture, nothing that needs to be hidden, nothing of which one need be ashamed in broad daylight. Of John Denholm Brash, the Methodist apostle of love, his son said, "Chief among my impressions of his excellencies is that of his sincerity. Every passing mood was faithfully reflected in his words. The fleeting opinion or feeling was not concealed. You were allowed to trace processes in his thought which most men hide from view. He always lived with the blinds up, and you saw all the workings of his mind. . . . He could afford to let his friends look him through and through." That is the kind of purity proposed in the Christian Ideal, where there is nothing to hide and no fear of what broad daylight might reveal.

Another word is used by Paul in addressing the Corinthians (2 Cor. vii. 11)—"In everything ye have

approved yourselves to be pure in this matter." They were *approved pure*, unmingled, unalloyed, unadulterated. The word denotes patent innocency, consistent goodness, that which is free from what is sullied or worthless. It was promised (Matt. iii. 11-12) that the effect of the baptism of the Spirit would be like the winnowing of harvest, the garnering of the wheat after the destruction of the chaff. The Spirit purifies the heart from chaff and makes it good all through, like winnowed grain.

Another word is culled from the terminology of sacrifice—"He chose us in Him, that we should be whole and *without blemish* before Him in love" (Eph. i. 4; 1 Thess. v. 23; Phil. ii. 15). The word was used to designate the absence of anything amiss in a sacrifice, of anything which would render it unworthy to be offered to God. The Christian is to possess purity "as of a lamb without blemish"; and it is the will of the Redeemer to present him "without spot or wrinkle or any such thing," so that the Father may say of him, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."

The old question as to whether the principle of sin within the soul is eradicated, suppressed or neutralized by the Spirit is bound to arise. There are some who argue for sin's endless sovereignty. They believe that we are condemned to a life of perpetual sinning. They are obsessed with the thought of the thralldom of sin. They defer to the enemy of souls as though there had been no triumph over him at Golgotha. It is quite certain that this is not the apostolic mood. As Dr. Moody has said, "While we have reason to covet a deeper sense of sin, we should live more apostolic lives if we coveted and obtained a more triumphant sense of grace." The apostolic mood is given in the words—"Sin shall not have dominion over you." That was the one Pauline proclamation which the Reformers tended to obscure; and the recovery of the view of the Upper Room company would restore it to us.

Against the prejudice that sin is unconquerable in this life the Spirit taught them that sin is anomalous in the Christian. Accordingly they shook off the sense of imminent defeat and began to reign in life. They refused to consent to the notion that the Christian life is a losing struggle; the Spirit in them made it a pageant of triumph. They gloried in the abounding possibilities of grace. As we see them in the strength of their life, they do not suggest the sense of sin, but rather the sense of victory. They did not discuss what had happened to the entail of sin: they rather took the practical view that whatever its fate, they, in the Spirit's power, were no longer under its dominion. "Whether sin is suspended or extinguished," said Wesley, "I will not dispute. It is enough that those who are perfect in love feel no temper contrary to pure love while they rejoice, pray and give thanks continually." This is the apostolic temper.

The cleansed Christian may occasionally be conscious of the old habit as a hostile force; and there may be moments when it is a definite peril. But temptation, even though it be from within, does not defile unless we yield to it. The point is, that there is no necessity to yield; and they are genuinely cleansed from sin who have complete victory over each temptation as it arises. This overcoming power is the cleansing force that is promised. "Herein," continued Wesley, "I find the difference between this and my former state chiefly consisted; I was striving, yea fighting with all my might, under the Law as well as under grace; but then I was sometimes, if not often, conquered; now I was always conqueror." The struggle continues, but defeat is no longer inevitable. The Christian heart, as cleansed by the Spirit, has liberty from the law (the habit) of sin and liberty to follow the will of God once made known.

The new cleansing does not mean freedom from temptation, but it does mean freedom from the paralysis

which necessitates failure. It does not mean freedom from conflict, but it does mean freedom from inevitable defeat. Moral effort has not been superseded, but the struggle is no longer hopeless. It does not mean freedom from the liability to fall, but it does mean freedom from the necessity to fall. It does not mean freedom from infirmity, but it does mean freedom from all spiritual ailments which are the result of disobedience. It does not mean freedom from faults committed inadvertently through ignorance, but it does mean freedom from wilful and deliberate transgression of the will of God. "Everyone may *mistake* as long as he lives," said Wesley, "and a mistake in opinion may occasion a mistake in practice. . . . Such transgressions you may call sin, if you please; I do not." The Spirit-filled are still liable to involuntary transgressions, which, as they grow in grace and understanding, should diminish; but Pentecost ends "the law of sin."

The logic of the New Testament is quite clear. He who sins deliberately insults the Spirit of Grace. This implies that the Spirit cannot abide in the man who deliberately sins. Therefore, the man in whom the Spirit abides does not sin deliberately. Sin is no longer the habitual disposition of the soul; it has lost its inner propulsion and no longer proves irresistible. Mother Eva puts the doctrine tersely—"Christ does not bring us into a position where it is impossible to sin, but where it is possible not to sin. Sin in the case of a true believer should be analogous to a railway accident and never according to time-table." There is new power through the cessation of inward conflict, through the neutralizing of the urge to sin, through the elimination of the dross of base desire.

The cleansing grace of the Spirit gives meaning to Paul's proclamation, "Sin shall not have dominion over you." The cleansed Christian may sin, but he need not.

It is not impossible for him to descend to the old life, but it is unnecessary. Our present ignorance nullifies the claim to faultlessness, but every obedient believer may be *blameless* in the sight of God. Heart-purity is part of the Evangel of Pentecost. Once more it is not conceived as a human attainment; it is of utter grace. The soul that has looked upon the Divine Holiness despairs of being clean, but through the promise of the Spirit is given confidence to say,

“If nothing is too hard for Thee,
All things are possible to me.”

The Spirit of the Lord is not straitened. Through His power there is an overcoming life for the believer here and now. He was granted to save Christ's people from the nature and defilement, as well as from the guilt, of sin. They may have abiding victory now. God never commands what is impossible; and every command is pre-faced by promise. He said, “Be ye holy for I am holy”; and He has made it possible.

There is one final word, lest any should make this cleansing an end in itself. We are not cleansed for ornament, but for use. The beauty of holiness is not beauty for beauty's sake, but beauty casually achieved in the process of making the soul fit for the Master's use.

Dr. Kelman pointed out that Roman architecture never aimed at being pretty, but at being *right* for the purpose it was meant to serve. “But the highest beauty is, after all, a matter far more of truth than ornament; and there are many remains of Roman work in which such high beauty has been unconsciously attained.” The Romans built to accomplish some definite practical purpose, and for that end they built thoroughly and well. “The result is the beauty which comes like a crown upon honest work beyond the design of the workers, a beauty of wholeness, adequacy, truth, which is perhaps not so far removed from

the Hebrew idea of 'the beauty of holiness' as careless observers might be disposed to think."

Dr. Kelman's word is salutary as well as interesting. There are some who seek heart-purity for its own sake; but it is not an end in itself. It is, so to speak, an accidental product of the Spirit as He fits and equips the soul for the Master's use. His aim is practical, not ornamental. The beauty of holiness is the beauty of adequacy; it is poise rather than polish; it is the fair line of a vessel obviously adequate to the task for which it was ordained.

*

AN ADEQUATE DYNAMIC

But spiritual renewal is not only negative. It is positive. It is the love of God filling the heart, and issuing in goodwill and love toward all men. Tolstoi, whose testimony about the cleansing of desire was quoted at the head of the last section, also added, "I began to desire things that I had never desired before." This positive aspect of spiritual renewal is expounded in Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount; and Dr. Stanley Jones here offers his testimony to the fact that an adequate dynamic to fulfil Christ's programme can be found through prayer. The passage is an excerpt from The Christ of the Mount.

What Jesus holds before us in the Sermon on the Mount is a counsel of perfection, which means a counsel of despair. But with what follows, anything—everything comes within the range of possibilities, nay, actualities. For He now proceeds in the tenderest words to announce the most intimate, the most gracious and the most utterly adequate offer of the Divine co-operation that ever fell upon human ears. Would that it would fall upon our hearts with the same freshness as it fell upon the hearts of those men who sat before Him on the mountain-side, and would that we would take it with the same abandon as they did! Here is the offer:

“Ask and it shall be given you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you: for everyone that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you who, if his son shall ask him for a loaf, will give him a stone: or if he shall ask for a fish, will give him a serpent? If ye then being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things (the Holy Spirit—Luke) to them that ask Him?” (ch. vii. 7-11). In this place I prefer Luke’s “the Holy Spirit” in place of Matthew’s “good things” as more closely representing the mind of Jesus. I cannot imagine that Jesus, whose coming was specifically to baptize with the Holy Spirit, would lay before us the amazing charter of the new life, and then fail to mention the one power that could make the whole possible, namely, the power of the Holy Spirit. It is unthinkable. After all, isn’t the difference in the spiritual lives of people just the difference between “good things” and “the Holy Spirit”? Some want “good things” in religion—inspiration, ideals, guidance, forgiveness and so on—and are content with them, while others are content only with the Holy Spirit, the source of all good things. Some want things, but others are not content with less than a Person. Any spiritual life will be fickle, moody, uncertain and inadequate that is dependent upon good things coming from without to them, instead of being dependent on an inner fellowship with a living Person, in whom we have all good things—and more! “Good things” have a way of being transitory, but “He shall abide with you for ever.” When the rich young ruler ran to Jesus and said: “Master, what good thing must I do that I may have eternal life?” Jesus replied: “Why asketh thou me concerning that which is good? One there is who is good.” He tried to lift the man from the “good thing” to a Person—“one there is who is good.” For goodness is not possible

except we come into vital and immediate contact with the source of goodness—God. Someone has said that “you cannot make up your mind about the good until you have made up your mind about God,” which is true. But, deeper, you cannot make your mind good unless you make God’s mind your goodness. There must be a transfusing in order to a transformation.

Jesus now provided for the one thing that will make all that He has been saying effective, namely, the inner reinforcement of our moral natures with immediate and saving contact with the Divine. The tragedy of the world is a righteous, but weak will. We are more weak than wicked. And yet, that weakness is synonymous with wickedness when there is such a dynamic on the one hand and such a demand on the other. We need life—Life. The prayer of Richard Jeffries is our very own: “Give me life, more life.”

“So you think India is turning to Christ?” said a very earnest and able Hindu to me one day. “I am afraid that is very superficial. The men who came out of the meeting last night laughed at your idea that ‘religion is a cry for life.’ How can the dead understand that? They don’t want life; they want to escape from life.” That is true of many who have lost their nerve, but most of us have not, and we want life. Religion must manifest itself as victorious vitality or fail humanity. It is reassuring that Jesus now provides for adequate life within, that we may live this glorious life He sets before us.

The coming of the Holy Spirit within means *life*. Jesus in that memorable hour with Nicodemus said: “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. . . . Marvel not that I say unto you ye must be born from above (margin). The Spirit breatheth where it listeth (margin), and thou hearest the voice thereof: but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit”

(John iii. 5-8). The figure that Jesus uses here of the Spirit breathing over the chaos of the human heart, and bringing to it new life and symmetry and order, is the figure used of the first creation: "The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God brooded over the face of the waters." Here was a condition akin to that of the human heart before the Spirit brings to it the touch of life. Do not some of us know what it is to have a condition within that corresponds to that—the inner life without form and void, and darkness upon the face of the deep? Without form! An inner life that is chaotic, no central purpose running through it, a clash of elemental forces in the dark. And void! A sense of meaningless, futile striving, the hell of getting nowhere, the utter goallessness of life. And darkness upon the face of the deep! We feel that there are depths within us unsounded, but darkness broods over them—no sense of certainty anywhere. And then the Spirit, as gently as the coming of the dawn, broods over the chaos of our inner life, and the miracle, the astounding miracle of spiritual birth takes place. How it is done we do not know, but we do know that there is no longer that sense of purposelessness in life, the void is gone, and darkness has given place to dawn. Just as the Spirit brooded over matter and brought out of the chaos a cosmos, a world under the direction of living forces within, moving on to richer unfolding of life, so over the chaos of our poor lives He broods, and out of it comes the sense of being taken hold of by life, by purpose, by power that makes for harmony, beauty, love. A stark miracle has taken place. We are born anew! It is futile to argue against it. Can the unborn argue against the born? The born know—they live, they move and they have their being now in an entirely new world—God.

"You talk about the living Christ within, and knowing God, and freedom from the old life, and of being immedi-

ately in fellowship with the living God. It all gets on my nerves. I don't like it. I go through my religious duties and perform them with care and regularity, and yet I know nothing of what you talk about," said a very High Churchman to me one day. And then he added: "And there is Father —, who is a High Churchman, and yet he talks the same language that you do. You are a very Low Churchman and he is very High, and yet you seem to talk the same language. You are both enigmas to me." Immediately afterwards we went into the High Church service, and after it was over, as we walked away, he clutched my arm—I thought a little vigorously—and said he wanted to see me again. As he sat down there was a glow in his face as he said: "I know it. It has happened. I opened my heart to Him and it happened. I am a new man." He was! The miracle of the new birth had taken place. Said an obviously transformed young woman: "I came to India because my husband was called, but I inwardly rebelled, and when I went on board ship I felt I was leaving life behind me in America. But one evening, while walking out, I found Christ on the Indian road. From that day to this I would not mind if He sent me to the loneliest island of the South Seas. He is life. I didn't leave life behind me in America. I have it." She too had joined the twice-born.

Jesus uses a phrase that gives us an inkling of the meaning of this new life: "born from above" (margin). What does it mean to be born from above? To catch His meaning we must remember that there are five kingdoms representing five stages of life. At the lowest is the Mineral Kingdom, above that the Plant Kingdom, then the Animal Kingdom, above that the Kingdom of Man, and above all is the Kingdom of God. We stand between two kingdoms: the Kingdom of the Animal below us and the Kingdom of God above us. The Kingdom of the Animal stands for a vast self-assertion, war sounds through it, it is red in tooth

and claw; it stands for the survival of the fittest, for self against the rest. As I sit here and write, past my window every day go crows with the quivering bodies of the young birds in their beaks which they have robbed from the nests of frantic parents. In spite of gleams of altruisms, a vast selfishness reigns in the lower kingdom. Above us the higher Kingdom stands for something different: it stands, not for self against the rest, but self for the sake of the rest; not for the survival of the fittest, but for the revival of the unfit; not for life red in tooth and claw, but for life crimsoning into sacrifice for the sake of the weak; not for strife, but for harmony, peace, life. Now life for us may be born from above or born from below. We may be controlled by the selfishness of lower nature, or controlled by the unselfish love of the higher Kingdom. How then may we pass from the level of mere unregenerate humanity to the higher level of life? To get the clue let us go down to the lowest kingdom, the Mineral Kingdom, and see how it is possible to pass from the Mineral Kingdom to the Kingdom of the Plant. Here on the bosom of the lake is a lotus flower in its white purity. Below it is the foul, polluted mud. They are in two kingdoms, and between them there is a great gulf of purity fixed. But the mud, having seen something higher, longs to rise and share this higher life. But it cannot will itself there. Nor will education about the higher life suffice, for obviously it needs not information, but transformation. How then is it to get up? The way up is the way down. The lotus flower comes down and mingles amid the foul earth, and says to it: "Would you share my life? Then do two things: Renounce your old life of being mud, and surrender your life to my life and utterly trust me." The foul mud does these two things, and up, up, it is lifted above itself and the old life, and it knows not how, but it finds itself possessed by new life and blooming in the beauty of the lotus flower. It was born from above. Except the Mineral Kingdom be born from

above it cannot see the Kingdom of the Plant. We who are in the Kingdom of Man and are ruled by the selfishness from below, are shut up to the same alternative. We cannot lift ourselves into the Kingdom of God however hard we may strive, for if we were able to gain it by our own efforts, then our righteousness would be self-righteousness, and that would cut straight across the very spirit of the new Kingdom. Obviously it is not enough for us to be educated about the higher life, however useful education may be. In the words of Dr. Hope at the Jerusalem Conference: "The world already knows much of Jesus. We need not only to know Him, but to choose Him." Again the way up is the way down. There is no royal road to God, but there is a Royal Road from God to man. God takes it. Jesus is Heaven's Lotus Flower coming down, and mingling amid our unclean world, He says to us: "Do two things—renounce your old ways and surrender your life to my life." Hesitatingly, and often tremblingly, we do it—for are we not letting go the one thing we have? but lo! we are taken hold of by power not our own, infused with life not our own, and transformed and transfigured, we find ourselves sharing a new Kingdom. We are born from above.

This is the first step on the pathway that leads to the goal of being perfect as the Father in Heaven is perfect. We cannot live life unless we have life. To get into the kingdom of knowledge we must have brains; to get into the kingdom of art we must have taste; to get into the Kingdom of God we must have life. The first step through divided personality is reborn personality. Julian Huxley ends his book by inviting us "to believe in the religion of life." We do! But not perhaps as Huxley would suggest.

William James puts it in this way: "Here is a life divided, consciously wrong, inferior and unhappy; that life becomes united, consciously right, superior and happy by its firm hold upon religious realities." A life divided!

We have seen, in our pilgrimage through this book, how painful our inner divisions are. We are at war with ourselves, our spiritual resources exhausted in an inner civil war. Goethe echoed this universal experience when he said: "I find two natures struggling within me." Consciously wrong! No words are emblazoned on the sky declaring our wrongness, but that inner sense of having missed the way, of coming out at the place of blankness and futility, and, worse still, of being possessed by a sense of estrangement, of spiritual orphanage—the result of guilt. Inferior! Feeling that we are made for the higher, we live in the lower; made to soar, we crawl in the dust; like a sea-gull, spending its days in a mud-puddle of a back-yard, when it is made for the wide ocean and the open sky, so we who are made for God and the perfect life spend our days in mud and muck. Unhappy! Of course unhappy, for no power on earth can make a man happy who is divided against himself, consciously wrong and inferior. It just cannot be done. But James says that something actually takes place in conversion: The Spirit fuses into one the divided self by the warmth of a new affection; cleanses the springs of life from the biting sense of wrongness by the gracious offer of cleansing forgiveness; lifts life and makes it superior, by the hallowed sense of having within it the Divine Guest; and as a consequence of all this, makes the life know the exquisite happiness of inner adjustment, of integration, of knowing that it shares something that is eternal, and that God, God, God is within!

Stanley Hall, the psychologist, is right when he says that "Every life is stunted unless it receives this metamorphosis in some form or other. If the Church allows this to fossilize, then psychology when it becomes truly biological will preach it, for the chief fact of genetic psychology is conversion—a fact of unsurpassed scientific importance and interest." Every life is stunted! Spiritual dwarfs, moral runts, undeveloped souls lying in the womb of matter

awaiting the touch of the Spirit to bring them to birth. The Japanese have a way of dwarfing the great forest trees so they can be kept in small pots. They cut the tap-root so that the tree feeds only on surface roots, remaining stunted, not higher than a few feet. Every soul is stunted until it puts its tap-root down into God and begins to draw sustenance from the Divine. If it lives upon the surface roots of a mere intellectual and material life, it will remain stunted and dwarfed. Spiritual conversion puts a tap-root of faith into God, and there begins a life that draws on Resources not its own.

Pratt speaks of "this new birth by which a man ceases to be a mere psychological thing, or divided self, and becomes a unified being with a definite direction." Yes; the new man is no longer a mere psychological thing or a divided self; he is a united being with a definite direction—that direction towards perfection, and, we may add, with power to move on to that goal. How can we move on to that goal unless we have life? Professor Gwatkin says: "We may have philosophy and science, criticism and culture in perfection, and a finely organized society too, and still have no life in us. The spark of life is . . . a true communion with the Divine." I know nothing so necessary in life as life itself.

Walter Lippmann, in his honest, if incomplete and pathetic book, *A Preface to Morals*, says that "unregenerate men can only muddle into muddle." He is right. The one thing that the new world awaits to bring it into being is new men. Listen to what a writer on mental hygiene says: "The thousand petty fears and jealousies and prejudices and inhibitions which keep us from perfect harmony and perfect adaptation to persons and conditions that surround us—here is the supreme problem of mental hygiene." Yes, it is the supreme problem of mental hygiene, and Christ solves it by lifting one up above the petty fears and jealousies and prejudices and inhibitions,

by lifting the whole tone of life within so that these things become irrelevant. Canon Raven truly says: "Freed from all self-consciousness, integrated in every fibre of his being, indifferent to praise or blame because free from ambition and fear, taking his place in the community of the universe by his union with God, the new man is far removed alike from the fighting, scheming, advertising, posing self, and from the dreaming and ecstasy of the visionary."¹ In the graphic story of the disciples toiling in rowing, with wind against them and making no progress in the dark, it is said that Jesus came to them and they were afraid and cried out for fear, thinking that He was a ghost. He assured them and they were willing to receive Him into their boat, and—note the point—"immediately the ship was at the land whither they were going." They could get nowhere against the storm; everything was ending in futility until Jesus stepped in—and then they were at the very place whither they were striving to get. We are often in that position: we toil in rowing, strive against the winds of opposition, but everything seems to be against us and we get nowhere. We are "up against it." Then Jesus comes to us. But we are afraid of Him, afraid that He is unnatural, a ghost, asking of us something that is impossible. But we take Him in, often reluctantly, and lo, we are at the very land whither we were going and couldn't get there. We've arrived! And it was all so easy when we surrendered to His Mind.

I know to some of my readers this sounds like romanticism. But is it? I stood out on the open deck of a ship going down to South America, and talked with a very sceptical Latin-American student. He pooh-poohed my idea of God, scoffed at morality and said that Beauty was the only thing worth while. As we stood and talked I looked up at the sky and said to him: "You see this sky above us; it is filled with music and ideas and thoughts and

¹ *The Creator Spirit*, page 219.

poetry and facts." He laughed and said: "Now you are getting romantic and poetic." "No," I replied, "I am not, for you see that man up in the radio room; he is catching these ideas and thoughts, and to-morrow morning what he has caught during the night will be on the bulletin board. He is catching them because he is tuned-in to them. You are tuned-in to the physical universe alone, and deny that there is any other universe, but some of us have tuned-in by repentance and self-surrender to the spiritual universe, and something happened, we caught something; we have been living in a new universe since, and on the bulletin-board of actual living fact there is the real proof that something has come." The romanticism was fact. "The Spirit breatheth where He willeth and thou hearest the voice thereof." The Spirit breathes His regenerating offer through the whole creation; the creation is a-tingle with the Spirit's healing Voice, it throbs in every atom, it speaks in every star, it moves as the central life through all that is, and yet how few tune-in and receive the Healing Life.

To change the figure, the New Testament speaks of grafting the Divine life within ours. When once that happens then nothing is impossible. They tell us that the peach was once used in Persia to tip poison arrows. It is a long way from the peach used to tip poison arrows to the luscious and life-giving California peach, but grafting and cultivation did it. It is a long way from St. Jerome saying in the fourth century: "I well remember the Scots in Gaul; they were eaters of human flesh," to Henry Drummond the Scotsman expounding and living "the greatest thing in the world"—love. It is a long way, but spiritual grafting and cultivation did it. It is a long cry from the African jungle to Booker T. Washington, but grafting and cultivation did it! It is a long way from the picture we see of the Briton when Servius the Roman said: "The stupidest and the ugliest slaves in the market are those from Britain," to Gladstone, the statesman and Christian,

but grafting and cultivation did it. It is a long way from the cry that sent terror into the hearts of every plainsman: "The Lushais are coming"—the dreaded head-hunters of Assam—to those same Lushais now coming to the plains to sing the Hallelujah Chorus, and to sing it exquisitely. It is a long way, but grafting and cultivation did it—and did it in thirty years! I believe in the superman because I believe in the Supernatural Man. That Supernatural Man offers adequate Divine Resources and, when we take hold of them, nothing is impossible—nothing this side of perfection.

I sat down with one of the finest English characters in India. He had been the head of a local college, and for fourteen years had been tutor to two sons of a ruler, one of whom would rule over twenty million people. He told me his spiritual pilgrimage, which was as romantic as a novel. He had come to this very place as a British private soldier, with no education and no ambition for one. But he was converted in a local church, and the conversion meant an awakening of his whole being, including his mind. He resolved to get an education. He walked eight miles each day to get a language lesson. They laughed at him and told him that they would not allow him to take the examinations, for they were only for officers. He replied that he would become so proficient that they would have to allow him to take them. He took them! To make a long story short, he became a Fellow of the Madras University, and in the very place where he had been an uneducated Tommy he became the head of the college and a tutor to princes. The secret of it all, he said, was his conversion and the verse he got hold of—a verse which seemed a Divine gift to him, and which stayed with him during the years: "Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no man can shut." Conversion and that verse made him. And the end is not yet! Any man who comes under the sway of the Spirit

has thrown open before him a door to endless possibilities. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith. . . . Behold, I have set before you an open door"—an open door out of failure, out of inner division, out of the old life into victory, harmony, the new life, and, best of all, an open door to the life that is perfect as the Father in Heaven is perfect.

But the Holy Spirit in this passage in the Sermon on the Mount seems to be an offer not to make us children by a new birth, but an offer to those who are already children. The statement seems to mean: If you are willing to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall the Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to His children. Now many of us are children, but we have not come into full possession of the inheritance that belongs to us as children. I am persuaded that full inner unity is not usually accomplished by what is known as conversion. It was not so in my case. I must confess, while the new life was wonderful, I found that it had introduced into my life something that, while it was there, was not there as fully regnant. The fact is that the introduction of this new life within brought about inner clashes that I had never before experienced. There seemed to be remnants of the old life that disputed the right of the new life to rule. This set up friction. This surprising friction sent me again to my Resource for a deeper unity. It came. While perfect character may take ages to attain, yet I see no reason why in this life we cannot obtain unity of being by the fusing, purifying fires of the Spirit, and a love that may be said to be perfect in that it is perfectly centred on its Lord. Since perfect character is an attainment, it will take ages, but since perfect love is an attainment, it need not take ages. But it will take the one thing we have—ourselves.

The difference between perfect character and perfect love may be illustrated by the story of the father who

came home after a long absence and was welcomed by his little boy with unbounded delight. As the father sat in the house, the little fellow, scarcely able to contain himself with joy, came up to the father and eagerly said: "Daddy, can't I do something for you?" The father, wishing to respond to the boy's eagerness, told him that he might bring him a glass of water. The little fellow, nearly tumbling over himself, ran across the room pell-mell to the water pitcher, poured some in the glass and some on the table, clutched the glass with a little finger on the inside of the glass, and then ran back across the floor with streams of water flowing from the glass and from the pitcher. When he pulled his finger out there trickled down the inside of the glass a muddy stream from his not very clean little finger. The father turned the glass around and drank every drop of it! The little fellow stood there rubbing his wet hands on his blouse and said: "Daddy, can't I do something else for you?" Now that can hardly be called perfect service, but it can be called perfect love. Perfect character is a growth, but perfect love is a gift, and that gift can be obtained now—at the cost of our all.

In the fires of Pentecost the discordant elements in the natures of the disciples were fused into one, and they obtained what modern teachers called integration. The Spirit lifted them out of themselves and centred their love on a holy Person. The most utterly purifying thing in the world is love for a holy Person. Their love for that Person burned like a lambent flame. We, too, must undergo that same fusing of the scattered forces of the inner life that our lives may burn with devoted love. "He is a reincarnation of the 120," said a Hindu of a devoted Christian. He believed in rebirth, and thought the Christian a reincarnation of one of those of the upper room. The usual impression we leave is that we are reincarnations of the disciples in their divided, fumbling.

pre-Pentecost state. "He speaks as if he is possessed by life," said another Hindu of the same Christian. He was! Unless our Gospel can manifest itself as victorious vitality, overriding all obstacles within and without, it will never appeal to this age that wants life.

But we do not lay hold of this offer of Jesus and appropriate it as a working way to live. We occupy ourselves with the marginal, and do not appropriate the central. When the great dam at Assuan, Egypt, was completed—a dam that was to make possible the irrigation system of Egypt, a marvel of skill in the making of it, and of usefulness in what it meant to the country—the authorities invited some African chiefs from the interior to visit it. They were taken over the whole dam in motor-cars, but they were uninterested until one of them spied a pipe coming up out of the ground with a faucet on it and water flowing from it. They got out of their cars, gathered around it in high glee over this water-pipe. Not interested in a dam that would send the life-giving waters over the whole of Egypt, but tremendously interested in a water-pipe! Some of us show childish delight in little "blessings," and all the time here is this Central Resource, the mighty, overflowing, life-giving Spirit that would turn our hearts and our Society from a desert to a veritable garden of the Lord.

We fail not because our resources fail, but because we fail to link up with them completely. Professor James says that "the brain is probably transmissive rather than productive." Whether this be true or not, we know that we have little power of productiveness. We run through our resources very quickly. But, on the other hand, the soul has unlimited powers of transmission. One of the most useful men in India said to me: "I am an electric bulb. I have no light in myself, but God sticks me in here and in there. Sometimes I am a high-powered light, and sometimes I am merely a parking light. But I am His,

and He puts me in where I can serve best." Spencer says that "Whatever power an organism expends is the equivalent of whatever power is taken into it from without." This is profoundly true for the Christian. There are men and women of small natural ability who are doing really great things because they are transmissive. They have laid hold of power not their own. The Spirit of God works in and through them. One of the reported sayings of Jesus is, "He that is near Me is near the fire," which is true, but not fully true, for if we fulfil His purposes for us we are not merely near the fire—the fire is in us, the source of our vitality.

A Hindu once said to me concerning a certain celebrated sadhu, "He is so wonderful that he can make his pulse-beat stop and become as lifeless as a bit of marble." He expected me to go into raptures. From a psychological point of view it was interesting, but from the point of view of religion it was useless. Do not animals do the same when they hibernate? I want not a lowering of my spiritual pulse-beat, but a heightening of it, till my whole being shall tingle with God and life.

An inexperienced airman started from Karachi to Bombay. He started late against the advice of the more experienced, had to go faster to make it, used up more petrol than if he had gone normally, came down half-way with petrol exhausted, and wired back: "Forced landing, engine failure." Without petrol, engines usually do fail! Christians do the same when they run out of the Spirit's power. Some of us blame the inefficiency of the Gospel when we do not take its Resources. The Chinese have a proverb: "Can a bucketful of water put out the fire of a wagon-load of hay?" Can we expect the Gospel to do everything for us unless we take everything it has?

How can we take it? The answer is incredibly simple. Jesus says, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you; for

every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." Never was there such a *carte blanche* given to human need as here. Anyone who has followed Jesus in taking the first step of self-renunciation as He demanded in the first beatitude now has a right—a moral right—to lay hold of the Divine Self for everything he needs. For he now asks, not with his lips, but with his very life. He can now ask with boldness, for he has begun with utter humility, the humility of self-surrender. Dean Inge says that "humility is pure receptivity." Since there is humility there can be receptivity. Ask, seek, knock—the first letters of each of these words spell "ask." They do all mean the same thing, and yet there are degrees of intensity in the words Jesus uses. Some ask, fewer seek, and fewer still knock. I may ask about a man, and that is one degree of intensity; when I seek out the road to his house, it is another; but it is still another when I stand at his door and knock to be admitted to his presence. At the knocking stage I am right up against the problem, and there I press my demand for immediate fulfilment. In trying to link up with the Spirit's resources some of us ask, rather feebly in most cases, and leave it at that; others seek with more or less spiritual intensity, but stop short; only those who come right up face to face with the matter and knock, and insist on knocking until something happens, ever find the resources of God thrown open to them.

But you say, It is not true that every one that asketh receiveth, for we ask many things of God and we do not receive. Jesus said, "He that asketh receiveth"—not necessarily what he asks, but he receives, if not the thing asked for, then something better, namely, the patience of character that trusts where it cannot see. A little girl in her prayers asked God for something that was beyond the purchasing power of her daddy. After some days he felt that he should see if her faith had been hurt by no answer

from God. So he said to her, "God hasn't answered your prayers, has He?" "Oh, yes, He has, daddy, He answered, 'No.'" The little girl was wise, for "No" is an answer, sometimes the best answer that God can give, for He says "No" in order to say a higher "Yes" to us.

But this being compelled to say "No" to us is only in the realm of the material. There is one realm in which God does not say "No," the realm of finding the Spirit. Here everything is open—always! Here we can ask, seek, knock with real assurance. In the tenderest words that ever fell from lips, Jesus draws the parallel between the human father and the Divine Father, and ends with this great climax, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" Although you are "evil"—and He puts all in that category—yet you "know how"—it is not merely a spasm of kindliness, but you know how—it is a groove cut into your very natures; and "if you, being evil, know how," then "how much more" shall your Heavenly Father, in whose nature is no evil, and who gives not as a generous impulse, and who not merely knows how, but being what He is cannot do otherwise, for the very expression of His nature is self-giving—how much more shall He give the Holy Spirit to His children?

With these words ringing in our ears, it is strange to find Dean Strong, in his *Bampton Lectures*, saying that "the Sermon on the Mount gives no word as to the way of realizing the perfection it preaches, it still remains a law." No word as to the way of realizing the perfection it preaches? Is this offer of the Divine Spirit not an adequate word? Can God give more than Himself? When God gives Himself, the Divine Spirit, to be the spring of life within us, then does this still remain a law? A law? This is not a law; it is a Gospel! The perfect God opens to us the resources of His own nature for the realizing of

that perfection, and the only thing that keeps us from it is our own imperfect response to this offer. God can offer no more—He can offer no less. Here God's enactments are God's enablements. No, this is not the piecemeal righteousness of the legalist, but the possession of our inmost souls by the Source of Life, and the result is a well of water springing up unto everlasting life.

The only thing that is lacking is our throwing open every portion of our being to it. The first year I was in India I had not seen a drop of rain for six months. The dust was up to one's shoe-tops and the heat suffocating, with the thermometer at 120° in the shade. Oh, for the rains! One night I was sleeping on the roof out under the open heavens when I was awakened by a roar that went up from the bazaar. "*Barish a rahi hai. Barish a rahi hai*" ("The rains are coming") was the glad shout that was going up from the sweltering multitudes. The rains had come. Never did anything seem so welcome. I stood out in it and let it pour over me! And my tears mingled with the rain-drops. The dust and the heat were over, and across the parched ground the very next day was a film of green. The response of Nature was instantaneous, for she had been waiting, waiting for this touch that meant life.

One day my soul was awakened by this word of Jesus about the Father's promise of the Spirit to them that ask Him. Was I not athirst for His coming? Was not my soul dry and dusty and fretted with the heat of its own conflicting desires? Then I heard the joyful news: "To them that ask!" I could ask—and did. Then the showers, the life-giving, healing showers! I opened every portion of my being and let it rain all over me. He had come, and at His touch the desert began to blossom as the rose. Things that I had tended to very patiently by my own efforts, and had watched die before my eyes in spite of all I could do, now sprang to life in answer to His

touch. My inmost being seemed to be made for just this. This was my life, because it was not my life. Real life had come. And all I had to do was to stand out in it and let it rain all over me!

It was the gift of God.

CHAPTER FIVE

WHEN THE ANSWER IS NO

THE problem of unanswered prayers is as old as the practice of prayer. Obviously it cannot be fatal to prayer or men would not still be praying. When, as individuals, we are brought up against the problem, however, we can do one of two things: we can either make the answer to our own little petitions the test of the reality of prayer—that is, we can seek to impose our own conditions upon God—or we can continue to trust God and to commune with Him until we reach a better understanding of His will, and receive His help to live it. Sometimes—indeed often—our conscious petitions fail because they are insincere. Perhaps the most famous example here is that of St. Augustine who says that he prayed for years to be delivered from impurity, but that he always added secretly “but not yet.” Prayer has been rightly defined as “the soul’s *sincere* desire, uttered or unexpressed.” It is thus easy to understand how our uttered petitions fail because our unspoken desires—which are our true prayers—contradict them.

We shall pursue the question of how to make our prayer more effective, how to pray aright, in a later section. But having considered the answers that come through prayer, it will be helpful now to consider those petitions that do not receive a direct answer.

*

DOES GOD UNDERSTAND OUR NEEDS?

It is not difficult to see why specific requests for individual benefits should often be refused. Anything for which we ask as individuals must affect countless other lives, and

God in His goodness must consider the good of all, not the selfish desire of one. Yet the problem of unanswered petitions for individual gain continues to be raised. Let us look at the elementary problem first. Here is a passage from Canon Lindsay Dewar's book Does God Care? dealing with the matter.

"At sixteen, recently confirmed, I was an eager and believing Christian," writes Mr. Joad. . . . "Then came disillusionment. I had been taught that, if I made requests to God for things I wanted, praying to Him long and earnestly and having faith, my prayers would be answered. I prayed to Him with all the fervour at my command for six months that I should get a scholarship, and, having faith, I was quite honestly convinced that I should get it. I didn't, nor were the subsequent assurances that 'things' referred only to 'spiritual things' and that God knew what was good for me better than I did, either consoling or convincing."¹ And so began a rapid decline into scepticism.

This is an oft told story. Hundreds and thousands of people have fallen away from religion because prayer "doesn't work." They have prayed and been disappointed. Consequently, they have given it up. Obviously, if our prayers are not answered, either there is no God, or, if there is, He does not care about our troubles, and therefore, as far as we are concerned, He might just as well not exist.

It seems difficult at first to escape from this dilemma, and yet, in fact, the solution of the difficulty is absurdly simple: so simple that it does not seem to occur to very many people. Let us put it in this way. There was once a townsman who, having been out of work for a very long time, decided to try his luck in the country. When the fine weather came, therefore, he set forth with his luggage on his back, tramping on until he could find a job on a farm. After a time, he saw a farmer leaning on a gate. He went

¹ A. Lunn and C. E. M. Joad: *Is Christianity True?* p. 25.

up to him and asked him if he could give him a job. The farmer asked him if he could milk a cow. Although he had never done such a thing in his life, he thought the chance too good to be missed, and, being very confident of his powers, he replied "Yes." Whereupon the farmer gave him a pail and a stool and sent him off to milk the cow. At the end of a quarter of an hour the man returned hot and bothered and exclaimed to the astonished farmer: "I give it up. I can't get the d—— animal to sit on the d—— stool."

The fault with a great many people who occasionally pray, or used to pray, is that their ideas concerning prayer are just about as ill-informed as that man's ideas of milking a cow. They have not the slightest notion of what they are driving at. They seem to suppose that the purpose of prayer is to change the will of God, to extract from a grudging benefactor certain benefits. This idea dies very hard, even among educated people. Thus Mr. Joad, despite much good advice from Mr. Arnold Lunn, still persists in confusedly thinking that "Prayer is a deliberate attempt on the part of the pray-er to induce the prayee to do something in his favour—that is, to act otherwise than he would have acted if no prayer had been offered."¹

That is the savage's idea of prayer, not the Christian idea, and it is impossible to deal with the question of unanswered prayers until it has been got out of the way. The savage approaches his idol and presents his gift in order to try and extort a favour from his god. He will coax and cajole him, and, it is said, at times even beat him with a stick in order to secure his ends. That is substantially the way in which Mr. Joad regarded, and still regards prayer, and it correctly represents the state of mind of many who give up praying because their requests are not answered.

It must be emphatically stated that it is not the way in

¹ Op. cit., p. 71.

which our Lord taught us to pray. He taught us precisely *not* to pray like that. That is the meaning of His much misunderstood warning against "vain repetitions." This is only too often taken to mean that it is wrong to repeat prayers, but, of course, that is not Christ's meaning. We know, for example, that in the Garden of Gethsemane He repeated a prayer at least three times, and probably a great many more. The emphasis is upon *vain*. There is no word for "repetition" in the Greek, and it is, in fact, a somewhat unfortunate translation. Our Lord's meaning is that we are not to think of prayer as young Master Joad, aged sixteen, thought of it, viz., as a means of extracting benefits from God by virtue of "much speaking." "Be not therefore like unto them," He says, "for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him." In other words, our Lord explicitly warns us against supposing that we shall be heard for our much speaking, even if we keep it up for six months.

If, therefore, we are to answer rightly our question, "Why are prayers unanswered?" it is clear that we must fully reject this pagan view of prayer. We must grasp firmly that *the purpose of prayer is not to change God's will*. God is good, and it would be as foolish, as it is blasphemous, to wish to change His will.

Why, then, do we need to pray at all? If God is good and "knows our necessities before we ask and our ignorance in asking," why pray at all?; at any rate, why need we ask Him for things, even if a legitimate place be found for other kinds of prayer? The answer to this, as to other problems of prayer, is to be found in the Lord's Prayer, in which we are taught to ask that God's will may be done. We are so accustomed to repeating this prayer—too often, it is to be feared, parrot-like—that we easily overlook its rather startling implications. If we are to pray that God's will may be done, then evidently not everything that happens is the will of God.

Here we begin to reach the real crux of the problem of prayer. It is this: what do we mean by the will of God? There are few questions which are more worthy of consideration than this one. In attempting to answer it, it is necessary to distinguish between two aspects of the Divine will, which we may call *primary* and *secondary* respectively.¹ God's primary will is His will as it is done in Heaven, and this, of course, seeks the highest welfare of all His children. His secondary will, on the other hand, is His will in so far as it is at present imperfectly carried out on earth owing to human wilfulness and disobedience. St. Thomas Aquinas illustrates the distinction between these two aspects of the Divine will by citing the instance of a good judge. A good judge, he says, wills that all men should live and be happy, but he also wills that a particular murderer be sentenced to death. The former is his primary will, the latter his secondary will. Even so God wills that all men should know Him and be happy, whereas He also wills that if men are disobedient they should be punished, and that the course of this world should be troubled.

Now when we pray (if we pray rightly) we are asking that God's primary will may be done in our own lives and in those of other people. That is to say, we are bringing our wills into line with the Divine will in order that the primary, as contrasted with the secondary, will of God may be done. If we may go back to our analogy of the game of chess, when "pieces" resort to prayer (if they understand what they are doing) they are offering their allegiance to be moved as the Player wishes, and, in what is called intercessory prayer, asking that others may similarly offer themselves. The more there are who do this, obviously the greater will be the likelihood of the game issuing speedily in a favourable manner.

There is, therefore, no question of attempting to per-

¹ Or, to use technical terms, "absolute" and "contingent." St. Thomas Aquinas calls them "antecedent" and "consequent."

suade God to change His mind when we pray. It is, indeed, more misleading than helpful to say that God ever "changes His mind." For when we speak of a human being changing his mind, we think of him as changing his purposes, and this God never does. For instance, a man may decide to poison his child, and then "change his mind." God must not be thought to act like that. His purpose is always good and perfect. But we also speak of a person changing his mind in the sense that he alters not his objectives but his choice of means of obtaining them. For example, the aforementioned man might, having decided to murder his child, change his mind as to the means he was going to adopt. He might decide not to poison but to drown him. In that sense of the term, God is represented in the Bible as changing His mind. If one instrument is rebellious and unwilling to work His will, then He will employ another. So our Lord told the Jews. "Therefore I say unto you, the kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof."¹ This, however, does not argue for fickleness in God, but is merely the necessary result of the disobedience of man. If God permits man to exercise the power of choice (a capacity which we are all conscious of having)² then it must inevitably follow that man may resist God's primary will, and so His secondary will must needs come into operation. This is not absolutely the best, but the best *in the circumstances*. God will always do the best thing in the circumstances, but if the circumstances are bad, then man has only himself to blame.

Doubtless God is responsible for the fact that man has the power of choice, and, if man misuses that power, the responsibility is ultimately God's. If we believe in the

¹ St. Matt. xxi. 43.

² If it is an illusion, nobody has ever succeeded in explaining satisfactorily how it arises.

sovereignty of God (as every theist must do) God is, in the last resort, responsible for evil to this extent. Here we seem to be brought up against an insoluble problem. The only answer which we can give, with our present limited knowledge, is that out of the evil God brings a greater good. Indeed, many of the noblest virtues and achievements of humanity would never have existed had there been no evil in the world. For example, the noble endurance of the martyrs would have been impossible apart from the cruelty of persecutors. Again, to take a different kind of instance, the genius of the Brontë sisters would never have come to light apart from the cruelties they endured at home and at school. This fact does not justify the evil which men do, but it does preserve the sovereign goodness of God, who out of evil can bring good.

We are now perhaps in a position to approach in the right way the question with which we opened this chapter. Since God will always do the best thing in the circumstances, our requests will always be answered in the affirmative, if that is the best thing in the circumstances. To return, for example, to Joad's prayer for a scholarship, it is not difficult to see that if he had been successful, his religion at that time would have been strengthened and perhaps it would have lasted permanently. But it is also certain that he would have been confirmed in that self-centred attitude which originally prompted his earnest supplication. Perhaps he became less self-centred as a result of his failure; in any case it seems to be the lesser of two evils that he should be self-centred as a pagan than self-centred as a Christian, since the corruption of the best is the worst. But, of course there are also the other competitors to be taken into account. It is clear that one of them had to be successful and that only one could be. We may rest satisfied that the boy who got it was *in the circumstances* the most desirable boy to win it. That is to say, having regard to the greatest spiritual good of the

greatest number, in the circumstances, it was best that the boy who did succeed should succeed.

But here we must guard carefully against a very subtle error. We must not think of "the circumstances" as being fixed. They are as fluid as the course of a river. To keep to our illustration, six months before the examination, it might have been best for boy A to win the scholarship, but when the day arrived, the characters of the boys might have been modified to such an extent that it would be better for boy C to have it. Everything depends upon the characters of the persons concerned, and character is a growing thing.

We can see this matter in a true light if we reflect upon (what is too often forgotten) the great difficulty of wise giving. We all know that it is possible to "kill a person with kindness." That is what too many parents do who "spoil" their children. The result, as we know only too well, is disastrous. On the other hand, the gifts which a wise father gives his children depend upon the characters of the children quite as much as upon the father. The following story will make this point clear.

A certain man had three sons. The eldest came to him and said, "Father, please can you let me have a shilling?" "What do you want it for?" he replied. "I think that I have spotted a winner and I want to back it." His father shook his head. Then the second son came to him and said, "Father, please give me a shilling. I want to buy some sweets." "What are you going to do with them?" his father asked. "Why, eat them, of course," was the reply. "What, all of them?" "Yes, all of them." The father shook his head again. Shortly afterwards, the youngest son came running in and exclaimed, "Father, do please give me a shilling. I have just heard that Tommy Brown has broken his leg. I want to go and buy some fruit and take it to him." "There you are, my boy," said his father as he handed him the money with a smile.

The moral of this tale is fairly plain. But it is commonly ignored by those who attack the practice of prayer. They seem to take it for granted that, if God answers our petitions at all, there is no principle behind His giving. The truth of the matter is that He answers them according to our capacity to receive, just as every wise human father does. *Learning to ask in the right way is the means whereby we increase that capacity.* For by unselfish and persevering prayer we become increasingly *sensitive* to the Divine influence so that God can more and more do for us and work in us according to His good pleasure.¹ This sensitiveness is, ultimately, the most important of all human qualities. There are to-day, as in Gospel times, very many who, having eyes, see not, and, having ears, hear not. Such are blind and deaf towards God. They can see no more than meets the eye and hear no more than meets the ear, and not even so much as that. They are like Balaam whose spiritual perception was so much dulled that even the ass could see farther than he. The remedy, and the only remedy, for this blindness of heart is to open the windows of the soul continually to God by means of persevering and unselfish prayer, thus letting in the Divine light.

There is, however, another difficulty which we cannot omit to notice in connection with petitionary prayer. God "knows our necessities before we ask," as we believe. Why, then, should we be expected to put them before Him in our petitions? This difficulty arises from the error of supposing that we put our prayers into words in order to impart information to the Almighty. Once it is realized that our reason for "saying prayers" is not to enlighten God but to focus our own thoughts and desires, the difficulty disappears. We put our prayers into words for our

¹ Archbishop Temple has truly said that the love of God is not a sentimental readiness to give us what we happen to want, but a passionate yearning to raise us to His own likeness.

own benefit and for that alone. If we were perfectly in tune with God, we should be able to hold communion with Him without using words at all. This is something which those who have advanced some way in intimacy with God can do; for speech is silver, but silence is golden. It is, therefore, not the actual words which we utter to which God pays attention but rather the thoughts and desires which lie behind the words. Here, again, the analogy of human relationships holds. If, for example, a sick person, lying in bed, asked to be given a drink of water and pointed to a cup containing not water but poison, the nurse would interpret his wishes and give him water to drink out of another vessel. If she took him at his word, the result would be fatal. Even so God does not answer the actual words that we use but rather the thoughts that they endeavour to express. It is the intention rather than the actual request which God regards.

“We, ignorant of ourselves,
Beg often our own harms, which the wise powers
Deny us for our good; so find we profit
By losing of our prayers.”

We can now see that the fact that our prayers are often unanswered is no argument against the goodness of God. On the contrary, a little reflection makes it very clear that the reverse is the case. The theory which the man in the street holds regarding prayer would, if true, be quite disastrous. It has been well described as “the penny in the slot” theory. The idea is that we ask God for what we want, and if we pray hard enough and end up with the magical formula, “through Jesus Christ, our Lord,” the trick is done. If prayer were really like that, quite apart from the fatal moral and spiritual consequences—as witness the story of the three sons—even on the physical side it would be rather terrifying, and probably the majority of persons would hesitate ever to dare to ask God for anything.

The way in which asking "in Christ's Name" is commonly misunderstood reveals in miniature the whole of the widespread failure of men to grasp the real meaning of petitionary prayer. As I have said, many persons use Christ's Name as a magical formula, as it was apparently used by some in New Testament times. No thoughtful Christian can endorse such a point of view as that. To pray "in Christ's Name" means to pray in a manner which He would approve, i.e., according to the principles expressed in the Lord's Prayer. One of these is, as we have seen, that we seek to do, and not to change, God's will. After all, it is much the same as when we "use the name" of some friend in our human relationships. We can only do this if we are pursuing some aim of which he would approve. No decent person would think of using the name of a friend to help him to achieve an end of which he strongly disapproved. Yet that is how very many people use the Name of Jesus Christ when they pray. It would perhaps be a good thing if, instead of using Christ's Name at the end of our prayers, we put it forward at the *beginning*. We should then call to mind His character and ideals every time we *began* to pray, and it might, in consequence, be easier for us to pray in the right way. With our present custom the phrase "through Jesus Christ our Lord" easily becomes mechanical, and then we have exactly what our Lord meant by "vain repetitions." That is precisely how the heathen pray. They think that by much talking they can work their will. It may even be sufficient to use a praying machine. When this point has been reached, we have passed away entirely from religion into the realm of magic.

It is worth while at this point to make a brief digression to emphasize the essential difference between religion and magic; for the distinction is relevant to the present discussion, and it is one which is constantly being blurred. By magic man seeks to coerce God, or the gods; for it is

immaterial from the point of view of a magician whether there be one or many. In religion, on the other hand, man seeks to obey and to please God. In other words, it is the exact opposite of magic. The only point in common between the two is that they both concern themselves with unseen powers. There can be little doubt that, even among Christians, there are a good many magical notions mixed up in their ideas about prayer. It is these ideas which are largely responsible for the mistaken attitude to petitionary prayer, and for the problem of unanswered prayer.

There is one point, in particular, at which there is a grave danger that people will import magical notions into the idea of prayer, and that is in regard to the need for perseverance in prayer. Our Lord laid considerable stress on this. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for everyone that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." And He told two parables—those of the friend at midnight and of the importunate widow—to drive home the need for persevering prayer. It is obvious that there is a clear similarity between this and the perseverance which characterizes the "vain repetitions" of the heathen. It is very important, therefore, to realize exactly how our Lord states His argument. It is an instance of a type of argument of which He was particularly fond, the "how much more," or, as we generally call it, the *a fortiori* argument. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, *how much more* shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him."¹ And the same argument underlies the two parables I have mentioned. The point of them is that if even an unjust judge and a very tired and sleepy man can be led by importunity to perform a good action, *how much more* will a loving Father do good, without having to be per-

¹ St. Matt. vii. 11.

suaded. The perseverance which is demanded of man when he prays, therefore, is—like the framing of his desires in words—for his own sake and not for God's sake. By persevering prayer our faith is strengthened and purified provided that we are praying in the right way, i.e. that our intention is to assist in the carrying out of the Divine will and not to change it. We realize that (to use St. Paul's phrase) "we are co-workers with God."

This last point is of vital importance, and it is one which makes quite plain the reason for the duty of petitionary prayer. We may express the matter thus. All gifts and all goodness comes from God. He is "the author of all godliness." Apart from His grace, man can do nothing. But if God's grace did everything, man would be a mere automaton. How, then, is it possible for God's grace to operate, while at the same time room is left for man to do his part? The answer is that it is man's part to pray. We ask God to pour out His grace. Our asking, persistent and confident, and accompanied by appropriate actions, is the condition of its outpouring. In this way we become literally co-operators, fellow-workers, with Him.

We may test the truth of what has been said by applying it to our Lord's own prayers during His earthly life. In spite of His outward disappointment and apparent lack of success, there is no problem of unanswered prayer in His life. The reason is that He practised what He preached. In every prayer He sought first and foremost the Father's will. There was therefore only one occasion when apparently His prayer was unanswered, viz., in the cry of desolation on the Cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" This thought of despair, however (which it is important to remember was a quotation from a psalm and not an original utterance), is quickly replaced by one of calm confidence, "It is finished," i.e. it is completed. "I have finished the work thou gavest me

to do." Judging from outward circumstances, however, there are few lives in which one might more reasonably have expected to find the question asked, Why are our prayers unanswered? Actually the question did not arise, and it never would arise at all if men prayed as Christ taught us to pray. "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may spend it in your pleasures," as St. James puts it. This seems to be almost brutally frank, but in the end that is the ultimate answer to the question, "Why are our prayers unanswered?" Unanswered prayers are a witness to the kindness and not to the indifference of God.

*

ARE OUR PRAYERS SELFISH?

Whilst it may be easy enough to see that prayers for material benefits may be selfish, it may not be quite so easy to realize that some prayers for spiritual blessings may be selfish, and that they thus profane the true spirit of prayer. This is expounded by Professor O. Hallesby in the following passage from his book Prayer, which carries the discussion of unanswered petition a step further.

"Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss."

—James iv. 3.

From the very beginning we approach prayer with a grave misconception. Our selfishness knows no bounds. In more or less naïve self-love we look upon everything in our environment with which we come in contact, as our agencies, as things which exist for our sakes, as something for us to make use of and utilize to our own advantage. We think and act as though everything, inanimate things, plants, human beings, even our own souls, were created for the purpose of bringing gratification to our selfish desires.

And we make no exception of God.

As soon as we encounter Him, we immediately look upon Him as another means of gaining our own ends. The natural man in his relation to God has this one purpose more or less consciously in mind: How can I, in the best way, make use of God for my own personal advantage? How can I make Him serve me best now, in the future, and throughout all eternity?

The natural man looks upon prayer, too, in this light. How can I make use of prayer to the greatest possible advantage for myself? This is the reason why the natural man seldom finds that it pays to pray regularly to God. It requires too much effort, takes too much time, and is on the whole impracticable for the simple reason that one even forgets to pray.

But when this same man gets into trouble in one form or another and cannot help himself or get help from anybody else, then he thinks that it might pay to pray to God. He then prays to Him incessantly, often crying aloud in his distress.

And when God does not put Himself at his disposal immediately and answer him, this man is not only surprised, but disappointed and offended, deeply offended.

Why should there be a God, if He is not at the disposal of those who need Him? That God should exist for any other purpose than to satisfy the selfish desires of men does not even occur to such people.

It is not difficult for us, who have opened our hearts to the Spirit of prayer and have learned a little about prayer, to see that such people have misunderstood the meaning of prayer. The use to which they put prayer is wholly and completely a misuse of prayer. They pray in direct contravention of the very idea of prayer. That this does not lead to good results, but instead becomes a source of disappointment, as mentioned, is self-evident.

But it is not only the natural man who in this way

misunderstands and misuses prayer. Unfortunately many believers are often guilty of doing the same thing.

We, too, have a carnal nature; and when it can gain some advantage or be delivered from some great suffering or misfortune, it has no objections whatever to praying. On the contrary, then, it, too, manifests a desire to pray which is nothing short of wonderful.

We should note well that the temptation to misuse is native to us and comes, therefore, automatically to every believer.

In Matthew xx. 20-23 we have a typical example of misunderstood, misused and unanswered prayer.

The sons of Zebedee came with their mother to Jesus one day and asked them for the highest places of honour in the earthly kingdom which was about to be established as they thought. Their prayer was no doubt offered in all innocence and good faith. They were cousins of Jesus and had, together with Peter, already been given positions of preference in the intimate circle of Jesus' friends. What they desired was that Jesus at this early hour should assure them of the leading positions in the kingdom also when it had reached its consummation.

Verse twenty-four says that when the other apostles heard what the two had done, they became indignant.

But Jesus reacted in an entirely different way. And that is what I wish to emphasize here. It is true, He replied immediately by saying explicitly that He could not comply with their request, but otherwise He took very kindly and understandingly to the whole affair. He advised them of their fault and explained everything to them. Such a tender and fervent tone runs through the whole admonition which Jesus gave them that it warms our very souls.

It tells us what Jesus' attitude is towards us when we come by families into His presence and ask Him to favour us in every possible way and avert from us all danger and

all unpleasantness. He does not become angry with us as we might expect. He understands us, advises us of our mistakes, and tells us how we should pray.

This is what the Spirit of prayer undertakes to do every time we misuse prayer and ask for things for ourselves, for our own enjoyment. Lovingly and kindly, but firmly, He reminds us that this is not in accordance with the true meaning of prayer. He shows us that this is to pray amiss, and points out our mistakes.

To begin with we do not understand what He means, perhaps. All we experience is inner unrest, both while we pray and after we have prayed. Besides, of course, we notice that our prayer is not granted.

This is usually sufficient for honest souls. They begin to search themselves and to examine their prayers. This gives the Spirit of prayer an opportunity to gain a full hearing. They begin to see how they have misused prayer, how the words of James apply fittingly to many of their prayers: "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may spend it in your pleasures."

When such people begin to realize this, they become both amazed and alarmed to see to what extent their zeal and their prayers for Christian enterprises are dependent upon the extent to which they themselves are connected with these enterprises.

If, for instance, there is to be a devotional meeting in their home, how earnestly and perseveringly they pray that the meeting may be richly blessed! But if a similar meeting is to be held in a neighbour's home, they do not always remember even to pray for the meeting.

Or, if they themselves are to preach, bear witness, or sing at a meeting, how they pray early and late for the meeting. But if they are not to speak, everything is altogether different both as far as intercession for the meeting and interest in it are concerned.

Or if "their" organization is arranging for something,

a Bible conference, or a mission meeting, for instance, they are vitally interested, and then they pray faithfully for the event. But, on the other hand, they find that they are a little less zealous and less diligent in prayer when some other organization is arranging similar events.

Or, it may be that an important matter is to be decided. They pray for God's guidance in arriving at a decision in accordance with His will. But they discover that their prayers after all were not concerned about ascertaining the will of God, but, on the contrary, about getting God's will and blessing to coincide with their own wills and purposes in the matter.

Anyone who has caught himself misusing prayer in this way a few times, will agree fully with the words of James quoted above. And such a person will feel more humble and helpless in his prayer life than ever before. He will realize how passionately selfish his own heart is and how replete with egotism his whole prayer life has been.

It is this struggle which makes us so restless and anxious when we pray. We are afraid that God will not permit Himself to be convinced by our prayers, but will do as He wills regardless of our supplications. I know of nothing that makes our prayer life so burdensome and trying as this does.

We pray for our dear ones, especially for the unconverted. We pray day by day, week after week, year after year. But none are converted. If there is any change it is rather for the worse. They become more worldly, more firmly attached to sin, and more callous towards the call of God.

The question arises, "Why does not God hear our prayers?" He hears the prayers of many others. There is, for instance, a family of believing parents who have won all their children for Christ. This makes it even harder and more inexplicable to reconcile one's self to the

fact that one's own children are unconverted.

Turning to God and knowing this, your prayers become more fervent than ever; they become almost violent. You tell God that He must save your dear ones, and you tell Him to do so immediately. But you do not feel right when you have prayed like that. No peace and confidence enters your soul, either before or after you have prayed.

Once more you have prayed in direct violation of the laws which govern prayer life. That is why it is so hard for you to pray. You have made use of prayer in order to prescribe to God just when and how He is to save your dear ones.

How our intercessory prayers for our dear ones become transformed when we learn to leave it all in God's hands! Our prayers become quiet, confidential conversations with Him about those we love so much and concerning whom we are solicitous as long as they are away from God.

You will then see wonderful things in your secret prayer-room. You will see your eternal High Priest on His knees in prayer. You will see Him beckon to you and ask you to kneel beside Him, and you will hear Him say, "You love these dear ones of yours, but I love them even more. I have created them. I have died for their sins. I have received them in holy baptism. I have followed them all the way, not only while they as children lived in fellowship with me, but also when they departed from me and entered upon a life in sin. You and I both love them; now let us both pray them into the Kingdom of Heaven. Only do not become weary and discouraged if it takes time."

Is it not true that such hours spent in secret in conversation with Jesus about your dear ones become truly blessed ones? You rise from such seasons of prayer calm and hopeful no matter how worldly and obstinate those for whom you are praying may be.

.

We forget to pray in the name of Jesus.

Every believer who has lived with God for some time has had a greater or lesser number of blessed experiences in his prayer life, hours when God, so to speak, lifted us up into His lap and drew us unto His own heart, hours when He whispered into our wondering souls words which cannot be uttered. What He told us was really not new either. They were old, familiar things, truth from the Scriptures about the Cross and the Blood and God's boundless love towards sinners. But it was God who was speaking.

Our hearts were filled with unspeakable joy. We had never realized before that it was possible to experience anything so blessed here on earth.

Then we began to pray. We simply could not refrain from it. Our hearts were full, and it felt so good to speak with God out of a full heart. It was easy to pray now. We saw God plainly because we were close to Him. Everything we thought of became a theme for prayer and thanksgiving. We spoke with God about our relatives and our friends, about believers and unbelievers, and about all the various branches of Christian work.

Then something happened.

While praying one day we failed to experience our usual joy and the usual zeal which we had been experiencing for some time. We thought, "It will return. Right now I will pray only for the most necessary things. I will intercede for others when the right zeal returns to my heart." But the blessed feeling you had once experienced in your heart did not return. And gradually you fell back into your old ways of praying.

Why did this happen?

Simply because we had not learned to pray in the name of Jesus. Prayer is the helpless soul's look unto a gracious friend. We had forgotten that Jesus wills of His own accord to come in to us and, in His own power, to

deal with our needs. It is not necessary for us to constrain Him by our prayers to take an interest in us.

This is another wrong way of praying. When Jesus hears our prayers and intervenes in our distress, He does so because His love towards us is free and unmerited, and because He by His suffering and death has purchased and won for us all that we need. And He is now ready at all times to give us these things. He waits only for one thing, and for this He must wait, and that is for us to ask Him to help us. For Jesus will not and cannot force Himself into our distress. We ourselves must open unto Him. And that is the only purpose that our prayers should serve.

The idea is deeply embedded in all of us, that we can by means of our prayers influence God and make Him interested in us, good to us, and kindly disposed towards us so as to give us what we ask of Him. This is the heathen within us, lifting his head. Among the heathen, prayer is looked upon as a means whereby man can win the favour of the gods and move them to give away some of their divine surplus.

The same thought flashes upon us frequently when we pray, without us thinking a good deal about it. We feel that there is something God must see in us before He can answer our prayer. We think that He must find an earnest, urgent, burning desire within us in the event that we are praying for something for ourselves. And if we are interceding on behalf of others, we think that He must find a hearty and spiritual solicitude for them in our prayers if He is to hear us. For this reason our prayers often become soul-exertion by means of which we endeavour to produce within ourselves attributes which will make an impression upon God.

You have undoubtedly noticed that most of us even change our tone of voice when we pray to God. We adopt a peculiar, pleading, tearful tone of voice. With some it is pure affectation. But that is certainly not the case with

most people.. It is with them a naïve, unaffected, genuine expression of Old Adam's views on God and prayer: When God hears how great our need is, and how urgent it is for us to receive that for which we are praying, He will likely be moved to such an extent that He will yield and let us have it!

A complete revolution with reference to this will take place in our prayer life as soon as the Spirit has taught us to pray in the name of Jesus. He will teach us plainly that what we lack in fervency, solicitude, love, and faith are not the things which prevent us from being heard and answered when we pray. These things merely reveal our helplessness. And helplessness is fundamental in prayer.

When the Spirit shows us the hardness, the slothfulness, and the indifference of our hearts towards prayer, we now become anxious and confused no longer. Instead they become added incentives to prayer, that is, the opening of our heart's door to give Jesus access to all our distress and all our impotence.

A new and wonderful thing now occurs. Our seasons of prayer become real hours of rest to weary souls. They become quiet hours, hours in which we lie at the feet of Jesus and point to all those things which we lack, and which make our hearts tired and weary. When our prayer chamber thus becomes a resting-place, then we begin to look for it and to look forward to it with joy and anticipation from one prayer session to the next.

*

WHY CHRIST SAID NO

Jesus sometimes refused to answer even good requests because He saw the possibility of realizing something better by so doing. Dr. Morrison suggests that this furnishes a clue to God's way of dealing with us. The passage is taken from Floodtide.

Jesus sometimes refused to answer prayer. We read of the Gadarene demoniac to-night: that story that has come like a breath from heaven on twice ten thousand bound and helpless souls. But it is not only a lesson in the power of Jesus, it is a lesson in the art of prayer. For the devils prayed, "Lord, let us enter the swine": and the devils got the permission that they craved. And the Gadarenes prayed Jesus to depart: and by the morning Jesus had left their country. But the demoniac, cured, clothed, in his right mind, prayed Christ that he might follow Him and serve Him: and that was the only prayer that Christ refused. "Go home to thy friends," said Christ, "and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee."

And do you catch the meaning of *that* refusal? There was an infinite pity for the poor dead Gadara in it. I dare say it almost broke the demoniac's heart. It would have been so exquisitely sweet to follow Christ. But men are saved to serve, not to enjoy, and service like charity begins at home. I picture the gladness of his wife and children. I picture the awe and wonder of the villagers. The mightiest sermon of the holiest preacher could never have told on Gadara like that. It was not in harshness that Jesus Christ refused him. It was in the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom. There were Peter and James and John for Galilee. But God had need of this curate for Decapolis.

And sometimes our prayers are refused like that. Other men seem to get all they want: their slightest wish is gratified. And the one thing we prayed for passionately, and it would have made all the difference in the world to us—that was the very thing that God refused. It would have been so sweet to have an answer. It seemed so harsh and bitter to be denied. But the stone which the builders refused became the headstone of the corner. And sometimes it is the prayer that God refuses that leads us to our service and our crown. "Father, if it be possible, let this

cup pass from me! ” And the refusal of that prayer has saved the world.

For we are saved to serve. That is the point. No man is redeemed by blood just to be happy. I trust I have been accepted in the Beloved many a day; but if you must feel like singing all the time to be a Christian, I am a long way from being a Christian yet. It is sickly and exaggerated hymns like that that work such irreparable mischief in the church. I am sure it was not a hymn like that they sang when they went out to the garden of Gethsemane. It is not when you feel like singing all the time, it is when you feel like serving all the time, that you are touched by the resurrection power of Jesus. And the things that I crave for have often to be refused me, in order that I may serve a little better. I fancy Paul would have been the happiest man in Asia if God had taken his thorn in the flesh away. But the thorn was left: Jesus refused his prayer: and how it enriched and sanctified the heart of Paul, and gave him new eyes for God's sufficient grace, all that we shall never know till, in the light of the full love of God, we begin to compare our triumphs and our thorns.



THE DANGER OF ANSWERED PRAYER

We have considered the problems of unanswered prayers, but it has well been said that some of the worst problems in life have been created by answered prayers—by desires that are fulfilled and prove destructive of our highest god. It must be noted, of course, that we are here using the term “prayer” in a different sense from that of communion with God. Prayer here means our dominant desires that have not been subjected to the will of God. Perceiving the danger of the self-willed life, how-

ever, helps us the better to understand why, when we sincerely seek God's will, some of our own desires—whether put into conscious petition or not—may be denied. This passage is taken from Dr. James Reid's book, The Temple in the Heart.

“He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their souls.”—Ps. cvi. 15.

Some of us are much perplexed by the problem of unanswered prayer. But here is a case where prayer was answered, and the result was tragic. The Israelites were on their way through the desert. They had many hardships to face and enemies to fight. They had to meet with hunger and thirst and loneliness. It was all part of their training. But they resented it. They did not think of the possible blessedness of the rough road. They only felt the pangs of hunger and the sting of trouble. So they prayed that things might be made easier and that they might have a comfortable time. And God answered their prayer. They got what they wanted; but there was a heavy price to pay. For they lost the qualities that struggle would have brought into their life. They became blind to goodness and deaf to the voice of God. They became incapable of God's fellowship. The spiritual world was closed to them for lack of the power to live in it. It was the inevitable result of rejecting the discipline of life. God gave them their request, but sent leanness into their souls.

It is a warning to us to beware of the things we desire. For these are the things we really pray for, whatever our lips may say. That is a fact that should make us think. What do we really want? What is it in the depths of our hearts we are really seeking? That is our real prayer.

It is a terrifying fact that life often gives us what we really want. If we do not get it in form we get it in substance. If we are seeking pleasure, our steps will lead

us in roads that bring it. If we are ambitious, we will force a way to our desire. Laziness may keep success from us; but if we want anything and go all out for it, we will probably get it. The tragic thing is that we will also get the kind of soul that goes along with it. Our desires will shape our character. We cannot seek comfort and pleasure and our own way as the chief things in life without spiritual poverty. That means the loss of love and faith, and the grace that comes through fellowship with God.

It is not good for us to get all we want. We see that very clearly in the case of children. No wise parent gives his child all he asks for. That way lies ruin. A rich man in the States took his boy to a well-known public school. He said to the schoolmaster, "I have had a hard time in my youth. My boy is to have everything he wants. He can have as much money as he likes. All his whims are to be humoured." To his surprise the schoolmaster replied, "I am sorry we cannot take your boy. He would ruin himself; and if he came here on those terms he would corrupt the school. You are trying to defraud your boy of the very discipline that has enabled you to succeed." The schoolmaster was right. The best training for children may be the discipline of learning to do without. For in that way they have a chance to learn what the real things are and to appreciate them.

It is as true of us as it is of a child. We may receive our requests and find leanness of soul. We may set our heart on things which may not be good for us to have. We may put the wrong things first. We may, for instance, set our heart on some ambition till it masters our will and directs our life. Stevenson says that a man can get £2,000 a year if he is willing to pay for it. He may put all his thought and energy into getting money. The result is that his better nature is starved. He gives up prayer; he ceases to find interest in worship. The spiritual world becomes unreal to him. He loses interest in the service of

others. He is starving his better nature. He gets what he wants but he loses his soul. The same thing may happen in the pursuit of comfort or reputation. We may be successful in life but failures in living. We may get our desires, and become in the process hard and proud and selfish. "The interests of the flesh," says Paul, "mean death; the interests of the spirit mean life and peace."

The same thing may happen in another way. We may seek something which in itself is good but is not the best. Conscience bids us take a stern way with ourselves. But we struggle against it. At length its protest is silenced. We cease to have scruples within. God has lifted His hand and let us go. We get what we want. But we have lost the rich treasure of His friendship. The higher level to which He would have led us is closed to us. Our inner life has lost its peace. Our influence has been robbed of its power. It is a tragic thing to seek our own way in defiance of what God asks of us. The way of self-pleasing may be strewn with roses, but it ends in trouble and tears.

There is a choice we must all make. It is that between God's way and our own. It is that between what Christ asks of us, and what we want for ourselves. Sometimes life refuses us what we want. It breaks our plans. It denies our request. The way we set for ourselves is barred by misfortune or failure. In that case we should thank God for the refusal, and seek to find His way. For whatever barriers life may set to our feet, the way of His will is always open. And often we find it by the refusals of life. Some of the most truly successful lives have found the key to real fulfilment through a failure at the beginning.

"I would have worked; God bade me rest.
I would have gone; God bade me stay.
He broke my will from day to day,
And said me 'Nay.'"

That sometimes happens. If we look deeply we will find His guiding in the hand of failure or disappointment. Some of those who have influenced the world for good have found their call to service because the road of ambition which they had set for themselves was blocked by failure. Disappointment and failure have always a divine meaning if we will look for it. The question they bid us ask is what God is seeking to make us or to give us.

But if life gives us success, we must search and examine our real desires to find out if they are in the way of His will for us. Otherwise they are dangerous. We must take heed lest satisfied ambition have brought inward poverty. One thing is sure. His way is the only way of true fulfilment. All that we really seek in the selfish and material things of life is found by seeking His will for us. Our hunger for life and peace is the real root of our desires whatever they may be set upon. That life and peace can only be found in the way of His will.

*

HOW TO FACE OUR DOUBTS

However satisfactory may be the answer to the problems of unanswered prayers, a mood of doubt and uncertainty about God is liable—indeed is almost sure—to afflict us at certain seasons. This “dark night of the soul” will be discussed in a later section, but it will not be out of place at this point to consider some practical help that we can find to aid us in our uncertainty. And here is a passage from the Dean of St. Paul’s book, Seven Words, showing how Jesus faced this testing experience.

The most certain thing which we know about our Lord’s acts in the hours of His agony is that “at the ninth hour he cried with a loud voice, Eloi, Eloi, lama

sabachthani, which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? " This is the only Word from the Cross which is given in the earliest tradition of the Crucifixion. It is recorded by both Mark and Matthew. In John it disappears altogether, and in Luke too the words are absent, though we are told that Jesus, shortly before He expired, cried out with a loud voice. We have every reason to believe that the report of Mark is true, because the cry is certainly not one which would have been invented or imagined by the early Church. Indeed, it is not difficult to conjecture why the later form of the tradition should have passed this Word over in silence. It seemed to contradict that estimate of the Person of Christ on which the Church was founded. Reverence shrank from the idea that the Son of God could have been abandoned by God.

This may seem, at first sight, to throw some doubt upon the reliability of our records. If they could be modified in the interest of theological ideas, it might be said, how can we be sure that this process has not been at work all through? A moment's reflection, however, will show that the opposite conclusion is more reasonable. The main fact is that we have these words recorded in Mark, the earliest Gospel, and in Matthew, the latest. Though they were evidently a "hard saying" for the early Church, they were not eliminated. They stand as a witness to the fact that reverence for Christ did not overwhelm, in the minds of the first generations of Christians, reverence for historical truth.

The chief source of the abiding power of Christianity lies in the belief and experience that Jesus may be our example, companion, and leader in our lives. This is where our religion differs from pure Theism. It is far more than even the most noble and austere belief in God; it is the conviction that, in this human life of Jesus, the Divine has been manifested. Jesus, God's Son, is our

brother, tempted in all points like as we are, going before us in the way that we should go, so that there is no trial or rough place where He has not been.

But there are many to-day who wonder if this is really true. They can agree that Jesus tasted the sorrows and renunciations of life. Much of the way He has gone with us: but has He gone all the way? Is there not one point where He leaves us without sympathy and without guidance? The most pressing trial of the finest and most sincere spirits of this generation is not the battle with the lower impulses or the allurements of vulgar standards of success; it is the haunting mood of doubt. In many minds there lurks the suspicion that there is no truth in what religion has believed about the world. Bewildered by the vastness of the scene which science opens before us, confused by the contradictory appearances of existence, distracted by the discordant voices of those who think they know the mysteries, we wonder helplessly at times whether there is any reality in the God on whom we have set our hope, and whether, after all, this life is not purposeless and unintelligible, "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." Does Jesus help us there? Has He lived through hours such as these? He never knew doubt. He never argued or reasoned concerning the existence of God. The sustained note of His whole life was surely that of serene confidence in the Heavenly Father and an unwavering consciousness of that Father's presence. What has this Man to say to an age of doubt?

This impression of the inner life of Jesus, though doubtless accurate with respect to a great part of His ministry, is not true of the whole. There was for Him too the experience of desperate struggle to "hold fast by God." At three crises we may gain insight into His wrestlings with doubt in various forms. The temptation in the wilderness shows Him confronted with the suggestion that His belief should be submitted to an immedi-

ate and decisive test, and so degrade His thought of God. The agony in the Garden of Gethsemane reveals Him to us as striving, with bitter tenseness of spirit, to discern and obey the dark will of God. And most of all, in this Word from the Cross, we can hear Him speaking out of a thick cloud of perplexity which has descended upon His soul.

How difficult Christians have always found it to believe in the Incarnation and to accept its consequences! They have shrunk from recognizing that the experience of Jesus was a really human one, and subject to all the limitations of our human lot. For this reason we often do not realize the true significance of the Passion and miss the heroism of the Cross. Men have supposed that He knew all the time the full purpose of God, that He saw clearly and with perfect certainty beyond Cavalry to Easter and Ascension. But in Jesus' mind there was no such clear and assured vision. His Passion was not, for Him, the fulfilment of a plan which could not miscarry. On the contrary, it was the supreme venture of faith. The Kingdom of God had not come with power. The preaching of the Kingdom had not called forth the supreme and final saving act of God. This last witness unto death, this challenge to the power of this world, would, even at the last moment, bring in the promised Reign of God. And at the point of death, Jesus is overwhelmed by the horror of failure. The last sacrifice has been a "vain oblation." The Kingdom does not come; God does not vindicate His Son. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

I do not believe that, as some critics would hold, this was the final Word from the Cross, and that Jesus expired with this despairing cry. The last word was one of peace. "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." And I think we may see how the mind of our Master struggled out of this last thick cloud of darkness into the serenity of the final prayer.

Too often the cry, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" is

taken to be an isolated utterance coming first from the mouth of Jesus, with no associations. It is, of course, the first line of the twenty-second Psalm, and there can be no doubt that Jesus was meditating on this Psalm and its teaching during His hour of darkness. This is a fact well worth considering, for it means that we know what Jesus was thinking of a few minutes before He died. The Psalm was extraordinarily appropriate. It is the complaint of a persecuted servant of God who feels that he is deserted by the Divine aid for which he looked. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me and from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry in the day-time and thou answerest not, and in the night season, but find no rest: but thou art holy, O thou who art enthroned upon the praises of Israel."

This last magnificent sentence is the keynote of the whole poem. It is the thought by the power of which the poet rises out of his dejection and dwells, in the concluding verses, with glowing eloquence on the coming answer to his prayer. If the refrain of the opening lines of the poem is, "Why dost thou not hear?" the refrain of the latter lines is, "Thou dost hear."

Can we not see, then, how Jesus grappled with and overcame this last dreadful temptation? The Kingdom was, to all appearances, a failure, crushed by the power of evil; the presence of God, in the strength of which He had lived, was withdrawn; doubt invaded His soul. He resolutely directed His attention to the stores of His memory. He recalled the times when He had been sure of God and of His mission, and dwelt upon the experience which He had had, in past days, of the reality of the Holy One of Israel. Further, through the words of the Psalm He summoned another ally—the company of those who, in former ages, had trusted in God. In body and spirit He was utterly alone. The world as it was contradicted His faith; the mocking crowd was the negation of God.

There was nothing in the present moment which spoke of God or testified to His reality. He was utterly alone; yet He refused to be alone. As the crowds faded from His view, He called from the history of Israel the "choir invisible" of men who had found God and witnessed to His truth. "But thou art holy, thou that art enthroned upon the praises of Israel."

To many of us this Word is more precious than any of the others, and has more comfort in it even than those which speak of triumph and final peace. For we find here that Jesus can be our companion and leader just when we need Him most. He has passed through the "dark night of the soul," and He has known what it means to look round on the world, and into the mind itself, and find no sign of God's working or any answer to our heart's petition.

He shows us the way in which we can meet the darkness, we in our little passions as He in His great one. We may direct our attention to the stores of our memory. We are too much the victims of our moods. Now the sky is dark and God's presence not discernible; but are we just creatures of this passing moment? This moment is not the whole of our lives, and what we think and feel now does not represent the whole of ourselves. We have had moments when we knew that God was the foundation of our life, and when it was clear to us that our aspirations after good were not attempts to clasp illusions. When the hour of darkness descends upon us, we will remember the days that are past. The storehouse of memory is worth keeping well filled, experience of spiritual reality when it comes to us is worth dwelling upon and keeping fresh in our recollection, because there may be a day when, for a time, we shall have to nourish our souls on what they have laid in store.

Most people miss the support which they might have had in the day of doubt because they insist on being

solitary. When God grew dim to Jesus He remembered that God was throned upon the praises of Israel. While we look out at the world and life through our own little window, and refuse to listen to the reports of others about what they have seen from theirs, we lack the support which we might have. It is only a tiny fragment, after all, that each one of us can see from our window. But we are not alone. Like Jesus, we may be supported by the choir invisible of those who have known the reality of God in their own experience.

We may say, perhaps, that for us the company of witnesses is greater than that to which Jesus appealed in the depth of His Passion. He thought of the praises of Israel, but there is open to us a wider view. The praises of Israel are a part of the great thanksgiving of mankind. We can think of the great progressive movement of religious and spiritual life which runs through the history of the race, of the growth of the idea of God from childish beginnings to noble heights; we can think too of the great human spirits, of many races and creeds, who have lived in contact with the invisible world—a great army of saints and prophets who span the ages and the nations. Surely their evidence is worth something, and, when my faith is weak, I may support myself on their faith. I dare not suppose that the Object of all this aspiration and praise is other than the deepest Reality of the universe. There is something—there is Someone—throned upon the praises of humanity. So, like Jesus, when our vision grows clouded and overcast, we may live for a space on the vision of others, and find in that a bridge by which our soul may pass from the cry, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” to the calm of a deeper faith—“Into thy hands I commend my spirit.”

CHAPTER SIX

THE FRIENDSHIP OF GOD

SO far we have been occupied with a witness to the reality of prayer, coming from those whose prayer has been answered, and considering how far that witness is invalidated by the fact that some prayers go unanswered. This naturally leads us to the heart of our subject—to what prayer *is*. Obviously prayer is something much more than a means to getting what we want, even when what we want is ethically good. There is indeed a paradox implied here, for we should not want what was ethically good except a Higher Will than our own laid hold of us. It is just that Higher Will that those who have persisted in prayer have discovered. In its simplest and in its sublimest conception prayer is communion with God. There is a unanimity about this fact among the great masters of the spiritual life in every age and of every creed. On our human side prayer embraces praise and thanksgiving—the lifting up of the heart in trustful joy—as well as confession of the imperfection we feel when we come to One who is perfect in love and goodness; and the response that comes in the imparting (not of moral power alone, or this or that or the other good gift) but of the Divine Nature, the gift of God's friendship. "If ye being evil know how to give good gifts to your children," said Christ, "how much more shall God give you His Holy Spirit." Such communion or friendship with God then sends us to intercession, for it is the very nature of God to love, and as we commune with Him our own love is deepened, our prayers extend in their range and passion. But in this chapter we will consider what is the final and only satisfactory answer to all prayer—that men attain to friendship with God. "Give me Thine own

self," prayed St. Augustine, "without whom though Thou shouldest give me all that ever Thou hadst made, yet could not my desires be satisfied."

*

THE IMPULSE FROM ABOVE

We may conveniently begin this study of the deeper meaning of prayer by reminding ourselves that the very impulse to pray is God-given. This passage from Healing in the Name of Jesus by Rev. John Maillard puts the matter very helpfully.

Prayer has been referred to as "a many-sided spiritual enterprise," and such it is.

The writer was once asked to address a meeting of students on the subject, "Does God Answer Prayer?" He began by pointing out how unhelpful it was to meet the many problems of prayer by stating that God always answers prayer, sometimes by saying "Yes," sometimes by saying "No," and at other times saying "Wait." The questioning minds of the students were suddenly disarmed when the speaker said, "God is the only One who ever prays." Our prayers are but the echo of what God says. All true prayer begins with God.

It follows, therefore, that prayer is the language of God's love. The more His love fills our hearts the greater will be the ease with which we pray. Love is not afflicted with dumbness. Love is never an arid waste that we should have seasons of dryness, depression or darkness. Rather these things are human moods for which redemptive love is the remedy.

Prayer begins with God and God is the end of prayer. This is its journey. It visits our earth like a tributary from the great ocean of God's love, "My word shall not return

unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

God's love is positive and creative and therefore prayer must have these characteristics also. It must be dynamic and healing, a veritable instrument of the Spirit of God, like a flaming sword, to destroy the powers of darkness, of sin, of selfishness, of fear and of disease. Such prayer is not begging and beseeching One whose will is doubtful. On the contrary, true prayer is storming and besieging the strongholds of unrighteousness.

I look upon whole-hearted devotion to the person of Jesus as of the essence of discipleship. I feel that no phrases of endearment and love can be too extravagant, but that many of us lose more than we realize by our lukewarmness and lack of spontaneity in our times of prayer and communion.

*

OUR GREATEST NEED

And here Professor O. Hallesby explains very simply that the essence of prayer is our willingness to find fellowship with God. It is from his book Prayer.

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."—Revelation iii. 20.

I doubt if I know of a passage in the whole Bible which throws greater light upon prayer than this one does. It is, it seems to me, the key which opens the door into the holy and blessed realm of prayer.

To pray is to let Jesus come into our hearts.

This teaches us, in the first place, that it is not our prayer which moves the Lord Jesus. It is Jesus who moves us to pray. He knocks. Thereby He makes known His desire to come in to us. Our prayers are always a result of

Jesus' knocking at our hearts' doors.

This throws new light upon the old prophetic passages: "Before they call, I will answer: and while they are yet speaking, I will hear" (Isaiah lxxv. 24). Yea, verily, before we call, He graciously makes known to us what gift He has decided to impart to us. He knocks in order to move us by prayer to open the door and accept the gift which He has already appointed for us.

From time immemorial prayer has been spoken of as the breath of the soul. And the figure is an excellent one indeed.

The air which our body requires envelops us on every hand. The air of itself seeks to enter our bodies and, for this reason, exerts pressure upon us. It is well known that it is more difficult to hold one's breath than it is to breathe. We need but exercise our organs of respiration, and air will enter forthwith into our lungs and perform its life-giving function to the entire body.

The air which our souls need also envelops all of us at all times and on all sides. God is round about us in Christ on every hand, with His many-sided and all-sufficient grace. All we need to do is to open our hearts.

Prayer is the breath of the soul, the organ by which we receive Christ into our parched and withered hearts.

He says, "If any man open the door, I will come in to him."

Notice carefully every word here. It is not our prayer which draws Jesus into our hearts. Nor is it our prayer which moves Jesus to come into us.

All He needs is access. He enters in of His own accord, because He desires to come in. And He enters in wherever He is not denied admittance.

As air enters in quietly when we breathe, and does its normal work in our lungs, so Jesus enters quietly into our hearts, and does His blessed work there.

He calls it to "sup with us."

In Biblical language the common meal is symbolical of intimate and joyous fellowship. This affords a new glimpse into the nature of prayer, showing us that God has designed prayer as a means of intimate and joyous fellowship between God and man.

*

THE JOY OF THE LORD

The final analysis of all spiritual experience is that there is a continual pouring of the life of God into the soul of man, and prayer is the conscious and deliberate opening of the doors of our personality to let Him in. This is the theme of this passage taken from the Bishop of Croydon's book What is This Christianity?

To be able to "see" beauty is an excellent thing: hardly less excellent is the "art" of translating what is seen into terms of poetry, painting, music and other visible, tangible, intelligible forms. A sense of a Divine Presence is, so this chapter claims, an integral part of the "make-up" of a Christian. To strengthen and cultivate that sense, to make this communing with God something habitual, something which governs and penetrates the whole of life, is an "art," an art which demands slow and patient learning. Such regular, ordered, disciplined communing with God is what is commonly called "prayer." To pray well demands at least as much thought and care and attention as many a man willingly bestows upon his business or his golf or his car. Some space then may rightly be given here to a consideration of some aspects of the art and practice of prayer.

Before plunging into what is a fathomless subject, let us remind ourselves—the reminder cannot be too frequently before the mind's eye of the Christian—that the whole proceeding of prayer is sane and rational. The prejudiced incredulity of some of the earlier scientists is

becoming out of date; and many of the scientifically minded of our own day see in prayer not a breach of the cosmic order, but an instance of the operation of higher, and as yet little-understood, laws. Moreover, the teaching of Jesus Himself about communion with God shows a sanity which is in striking contrast with the lower kinds of mysticism. He expressly condemns the "vain repetitions" of the "heathen" and the simplicity, the straightforwardness, the reasonableness of the "prayer relationship" with God as He reveals Him is poles removed from the irrational "mumbo-jumbo" which still, even among the civilized, turns "prayer" into a farce.

One other caution may well be heeded when one approaches the subject of Christian prayer. It is that true prayer does not in any way depend upon *feeling*. That "mystic" relationship with the Father God, with Christ as the Unseen Companion, which this chapter is describing, is not to be confused with, or made to depend upon, any particular emotional state. Once a man has reached the conclusion that *Christ is true*, thereafter he can, and does, embark on the adventure of bringing his whole life to the feet of God, speaking with Him, receiving from Him, "praying" to Him, on the assumption—after all, Christ's own assumption—that He cares and listens and answers; and all this is found to be wholly independent of any emotional consciousness of a Presence. "He that believeth hath the witness in himself."¹

When you see the Spirit of God at work in the world in other lives, and in your own heart—that Spirit which is clearly the source of your desire to know Him and love Him and serve Him—then it is quite unnecessary to become the victim of a morbid worry whether your motives are right and whether after all the whole thing is not an illusion. God is always *there*, if you want Him; and His "coming" is neither hindered nor hastened by

¹ I John v. 10.

what you may happen to be feeling. Often when prayer seems barren and profitless, and your own heart sadly cold and unresponsive, He has been gloriously "present" all along.

It is vital to bear in mind, in any attempt to understand and to practise praying, that the essence of Christian prayer is not "Do for me what I want," but "Do with me what you want." It is a mistake to think of prayer as an effort to get the Almighty to "translate our programmes into history." There is plenty of room for "asking" in prayer—Jesus Himself bade us ask—but not the kind of asking which simply desires to bend God's will to ours; rather the asking of the son who, completely in tune with the Father's thought and purposes, accepts and acts on His gracious assurance that "all that I have is thine."

The ultimate fact for the Christian, the final analysis of all spiritual experience, is that everywhere and always there is a continuous pouring of the Life of God into the life of men. There are a thousand channels through which this Divine life comes; the spirit of man can be, and is, interpenetrated, inspired by the creative Spirit of God in a myriad different ways. "God is all round us, a breaking sea of love and light and truth and joy, and all our task is, to let Him in." The most fundamental thing in "prayer" is a conscious, deliberate opening of the doors of personality in order to "let Him in." Just as the artist is more sensitive than others to the world of beauty which surrounds him, quicker to see it and interpret it, so the hall-mark of the praying man is a constant attitude of being sensitive to God. All who have tried to learn to pray in Christ's school of prayer find themselves bound to describe what they learn in some such terms as those used here. A great Christian has described prayer as being "the presence of God, known and loved, absorbed and absorbing." Another has called it "the ascent of the mind into God"; and another "a drinking in of the Divine

power and wisdom, and a co-operation with the Divine will." To explore this kind of contact with the Father God means deliverance from the prayer which is a mere cry for protection, or a longing to escape, or a desire for some selfish boon, and imports into the whole of life an altogether new confidence and vitality and joy and power.

To pray thus, with a confident laying hold of the Father's will and power for all His children, oneself included, brings an indispensable clarifying of aim and cleansing of motive. True prayer has to be an act of the whole man, an expression of the complete personality. You cannot pray one thing and live another; nor can you pray one thing, but all the while really *want* another. "O God, bless the missionary work of Thy servants in Africa: but don't ask me to be a missionary"—that kind of prayer simply doesn't "arrive." To try to *say* the right thing in prayer serves no useful purpose, nor is it any good to attach to an insincere prayer such verbal tags as "for Jesus Christ's sake." What matters in prayer is what you really want, and that what you really want should be laid alongside the Father's will; that, and only that, is "praying in the name of Christ." Similarly, for prayer to be sincere and effective, some things have to go: like pride, and unkindness and self-importance. The immediate effect of any real approach to God is always to make one feel ashamed: "God be merciful to me a sinner." Then it dawns on you that He does, despite all, want you to come to Him, and wants you to take and use and enjoy something of His unsearchable riches. And so, blessed by His forgiveness, with contrite heart and empty hands you come; and the joy of the Lord begins to steal down into your soul.



THE SOUL'S DESIRE

For nearly four centuries Christians have found comfort and inspiration in Imitation of Christ by St. Thomas à Kempis, one of the great classics of the devotional life. Here with beautiful simplicity is set forth the same truth, that the consummation of our prayer is attained when we find fellowship with God.

O Lord who shall grant me that I may find thee alone and that I may open to thee all my heart and joy with thee as my poor soul desireth and that here there be no creature to behold me but thou alone to speak to me and I to thee, good Lord, as of custom one friend speaketh to another secretly.

This I desire and pray thee, Lord Jesu, that I may be fully united unto thee and withdraw my heart from all other created things, that I may the sooner learn the eternal and heavenly things by means of the receiving of this holy sacrament.

Alas, my good Lord, when shall I be united and gathered all wholly in thee and utterly forget myself? Thou art in me and I with thee and thus assembled make us dwell together I pray thee.

Truly thou art my chosen and beloved Lord and it hath pleased thy benign grace to be inhabited in my soul all the days of my life. Thou art my peacemaker in whom is sovereign peace and true rest; without thee there is nothing but labour, sorrow and infinite misery.

Thou my God art closed and hid and thy counsel is not shared by evil folks: but thy familiar speaking is with the meek and simple folks.

O Lord, how good, benign and sweet is thy spirit which, that thou mayst show unto the sons and children thy

sweetness, hast vouched safe to refresh them again and gives to them refection of thy right sweet bread descended from heaven.

O grace inestimable and marvellous worthiness. O love without measure singularly shewed unto man. But what shall I yield unto God? and wherewith shall I recompense this so great grace and charity? Truly there is nothing I may give more agreeable to his mercy than to join my heart perfectly unto him.

And when my soul shall be perfectly united with him, then shall all my inward parts rejoice and then my Lord will say unto me, If thou wilt be with me I will be with thee. And I shall answer him, Blessed Lord I beseech thee dwell with me, for all the desire of my heart is to be with thee inseparable without departing.



THE ABIDING PRESENCE

Equally famous as an aid to prayer life is The Practice of the Presence of God, a record of the conversation and letters of Brother Lawrence, a monk of the seventeenth century, who before his entry into a monastery had been a footman, "a great awkward fellow who breaks everything." The theme of The Practice of the Presence of God is that prayer is not an occasional exercise, but an abiding attitude to life and that we can attain to a continual sense of God's presence with us. What here follows was told by Brother Lawrence to Nicholas Herman of Lorraine.

Brother Lawrence told me that he had been long troubled in mind from a certain belief that he should be damned; that all the men in the world could not have persuaded him to the contrary; but that he had thus reasoned with himself about it: *I did not engage in a*

religious life but for the love of God, and I have endeavoured to act only for Him; whatever becomes of me, whether I be lost or saved, I will always continue to act purely for the love of God. I shall have this good at least, that till death I shall have done all that is in me to love Him. That this trouble of mind had lasted four years; during which time he had suffered much.

That since that time he had passed his life in perfect liberty and continual joy. That he placed his sins betwixt him and God, as it were, to tell Him that he did not deserve His favours, but that God still continued to bestow them in abundance.

That in order to form a habit of conversing with God continually, and referring all we do to Him, we must at first apply to Him with some diligence: but that after a little care we should find His love inwardly excite us to it without any difficulty.

That he expected after the pleasant days God had given him, he should have his turn of pain and suffering; but that he was not uneasy about it, knowing very well, that as he could do nothing of himself, God would not fail to give him the strength to bear them.

That when an occasion of practising some virtue offered, he addressed himself to God, saying, *Lord, I cannot do this unless Thou enablest me;* and that then he received strength more than sufficient.

That when he had failed in his duty, he only confessed his fault, saying to God, *I shall never do otherwise, if You leave me to myself; 'tis You must hinder my falling, and mend what is amiss.* That after this, he gave himself no further uneasiness about it.

That we ought to act with God in the greatest simplicity, speaking to Him frankly and plainly, and imploring His assistance in our affairs, just as they happen. That God never failed to grant it, as he had often experienced.

That he had been lately sent into Burgundy, to buy

the provision of wine for the society, which was a very unwelcome task for him, because he had no turn for business and because he was lame, and could not go about the boat but by rolling himself over the casks. That however he gave himself no uneasiness about it, nor about the purchase of the wine. That he said to God, *It was His business he was about*, and that he afterwards found it very well performed. That he had been sent into Auvergne the year before upon the same account; that he could not tell how the matter passed, but that it proved very well.

So, likewise, in his business in the kitchen (to which he had naturally a great aversion), having accustomed himself to do everything there for the love of God, and with prayer, upon all occasions, for His grace to do his work well, he had found everything easy, during the fifteen years that he had been employed there.

That he was very well pleased with the post he was now in; but that he was as ready to quit that as the former, since he was always pleasing himself in every condition, by doing little things for the love of God.

That with him the set times of prayer were not different from other times: that he retired to pray, according to the directions of his Superior, but that he did not want such retirement, nor ask for it, because his greatest business did not divert him from God.

That as he knew his obligation to love God in all things, and as he endeavoured so to do, he had no need of a director to advise him, but that he needed much a confessor to absolve him. That he was very sensible of his faults, but not discouraged by them; that he confessed them to God, and did not plead against Him to excuse them. When he had so done, he peaceably resumed his usual practice of love and adoration.

That in his trouble of mind, he had consulted nobody, but knowing only by the light of faith that God was present, he contented himself with directing all his actions

to Him, i.e. doing them with a desire to please Him, let what would come of it.

That we ought not to be weary of doing little things for the love of God, who regards not the greatness of the work, but the love with which it is performed. That we should not wonder if, in the beginning, we often failed in our endeavours, but that at last we should gain a habit, which will naturally produce its acts in us, without our care, and to our exceeding great delight.

That the whole substance of religion was faith, hope, and charity; by the practice of which we become united to the will of God: that all beside is indifferent and to be used as a means, that we may arrive at our end, and be swallowed up therein, by faith and charity.

That all things are possible to him who *believes*, that they are less difficult to him who *hopes*, they are more easy to him who *loves*, and still more easy to him who perseveres in the practice of these three virtues.

That the end we ought to propose to ourselves is to become, in this life, the most perfect worshippers of God we can possibly be, as we hope to be through all eternity.

That when we enter upon the spiritual life, we should consider, and examine to the bottom, what we are. And then we should find ourselves worthy of all contempt, and such as do not deserve the name of Christians, subject to all kinds of misery, and numberless accidents, which trouble us, and cause perpetual vicissitudes in our health, in our humours, in our internal and external dispositions: in fine, persons whom God would humble by many pains and labours, as well within as without. After this, we should not wonder that troubles, temptations, oppositions and contradictions, happen to us from men. We ought, on the contrary, to submit ourselves to them, and bear them as long as God pleases, as things highly advantageous to us.

That the greater perfection a soul aspires after, the more dependent it is upon Divine grace.

¹ Being questioned by one of his own society (to whom he was obliged to open himself) by what means he had attained such an habitual sense of God? he told him that, since his first coming to the monastery, he had considered God as the end of all his thoughts and desires, as the mark to which they should tend, and in which they should terminate.

That in the beginning of his novitiate he spent the hours appointed for private prayer in thinking of God, so as to convince his mind of, and to impress deeply upon his heart, the Divine existence, rather by devout sentiments, and submission to the lights of faith, than by studied reasonings and elaborate meditations. That by this short and sure method, he exercised himself in the knowledge and love of God, resolving to use his utmost endeavour to live in a continual sense of His Presence, and, if possible, never to forget Him more.

That when he had thus in prayer filled his mind with great sentiments of that infinite Being, he went to his work appointed in the kitchen (for he was cook to the society); there having first considered severally the things his office required, and when and how each thing was to be done, he spent all the intervals of his time, as well before as after his work, in prayer.

That, when he began his business, he said to God, with a filial trust in Him, "O my God, since Thou art with me, and I must now, in obedience to Thy commands, apply my mind to these outward things, I beseech Thee to grant me the grace to continue in Thy Presence; and to this end do Thou prosper me with Thy assistance, receive all my works, and possess all my affections."

As he proceeded in his work, he continued his familiar

¹ The particulars which follow are collected from other accounts of Brother Lawrence.

conversation with his Maker, imploring His grace, and offering to Him all his actions.

When he had finished, he examined himself how he had discharged his duty; if he found *well*, he returned thanks to God; if otherwise, he asked pardon; and without being discouraged, he set his mind right again, and continued his exercise of the *presence* of God, as if he had never deviated from it. "Thus," said he, "by rising after my falls, and by frequently renewed acts of faith and love, I am come to a state, wherein it would be as difficult for me not to think of God, as it was at first to accustom myself to it."

As Brother Lawrence had found such an advantage in walking in the presence of God, it was natural for him to recommend it earnestly to others; but his example was a stronger inducement than any arguments he could propose. His very countenance was edifying; such a sweet and calm devotion appearing in it, as could not but affect the beholders. And it was observed, that in the greatest hurry of business in the kitchen, he still preserved his recollection and heavenly-mindedness. He was never hasty nor loitering, but did each thing in its season, with an even uninterrupted composure and tranquillity of spirit. "The time of business," said he, "does not with me differ from the time of prayer; and in the noise and clutter of my kitchen, while several persons are at the same time calling for different things, I possess God in as great tranquillity as if I were upon my knees at the Blessed Sacrament."

*

THE TRUE END OF MAN

"The act of praying is the very highest energy of which the human mind is capable." This celebrated dictum of Samuel Taylor Coleridge has already been

quoted. In these days of bustling activity, service is often esteemed as higher than prayer. The division between the two is entirely unreal, however, since the quality of our service will depend upon the spirit in which it is done; and only as we enter into communion with God will the motive of our service be cleansed from the defilement of self-glorification and patronage. Christians have always understood this, and in this passage from the famous Bampton Lectures, "The Vision of God," by Dr. K. E. Kirk, this truth is expounded first as it was discovered by those who went aside to seek God in past ages, and then as it applies to our own strenuous days.

In prayer, then, more than anywhere else, the monk believed that he would find that completeness of self-forgetful tranquillity which most of all should issue in self-sacrificing activity of service. He caught a glimpse of another fundamental truth as well:—that the mind in prayer must be directed upon God alone, and not upon the psychological results that are to be secured thereby. Prayer is a contemplation of God, not of oneself nor of one's subjective and transient emotions. If he sometimes mistook other ecstasies for the ecstasy of Christian prayer; if he sometimes treasured subjective experience too much; if sometimes, in giving prayer priority over action, he under-valued or ignored altogether the principle that true contemplation must go hand-in-hand with Christian service—these are lapses that may be forgiven him. On the great fundamental questions of Christian ethics in the widest sense, Cassian, Macarius, and the hermits on whose experience they drew, expressed the genius of New Testament Christianity with an intuition for which the Church must always be grateful.

Few who have thought about prayer at all will dare to say that the monks were wholly mistaken, either as to the object of their search, or in the choice of means. If we hesitate to endorse this judgment, a hint of St. Bernard's

will suggest a profitable line of approach. We have only to think of the contemplation of God in terms of *worship*, and apply to the understanding of it our own experience of corporate worship. As the worship of the Church proceeds through its ordered stages of confession, praise, thanksgiving, reading of Scripture and intercession (stages which correspond closely to the practice of prayer as given in Cassian's "Conferences"), we all experience from time to time—though perhaps rarely—moments which can fairly be called ecstatic. At such moments the worshipper is lifted out of himself into a higher and better atmosphere, which leaves traces for good in his soul when it returns to its normal lower level. He would be a fool and worse who attended public worship merely to experience such exaltations without any wish or intention of drawing from them strength to live a better life. But no one who has experienced them—and this is all that matters for the moment—is without some understanding of what the monks called contemplation, the mystics the "way of union," and the New Testament "seeing God."

Not that an act of worship is vain and useless if it fails to bring the consummation of self-forgetfulness. Contemplation, as a human activity, is not so much "looking at God" as "looking *towards* God." If the Christian in worship, public or private, looks towards God with all the strength he possesses, he has done his part, and may rest assured that in some way or another—though not necessarily through any type of experience with which the words of others have made him familiar—God will respond to his advances. To expect a response of one *particular* kind is to doubt the resources of God; to expect a response of an *emotional* kind is, once again, to be looking at oneself and not at God. And neither of these attitudes has any place in Christian prayer.

The doctrine that the "end of man is the vision of God," as a practical maxim for life, implies that the

Christian should set himself first of all to focus his thought upon God in the spirit of worship. It implies this of necessity, and of necessity it implies nothing more—nothing whatever as to the achieving of pleasures, rapture, exaltation in the act of worship. The only achievement man has the right to hope for is that of greater Christian saintliness—greater zeal for service—coming from this direction of the heart and mind to God. It can hardly be denied that in so far as unselfishness is possible in this life at all (to anticipate for a moment another question), this is an unselfish ideal. To look towards God, and from that “look” to acquire insight both into the follies of one’s own heart and the needs of one’s neighbours, with power to correct the one no less than to serve the other—this is something very remote from any quest for “religious experience” for its own sake. Yet this, and nothing else, is what the vision of God has meant in the fully developed thought of historic Christianity.

But granted that “worship” is unselfish, it may be said, surely “service” may be unselfish too? And further, a comparison of worship and service, viewed in relation to the world’s deepest needs, both spiritual and temporal, suggests that service—the unremitting service of God and man—is the more urgently needed of the two. The most, then, that can be allowed to worship is that it is a means, and only a means, to better service. It has no independent value. The true Christian must set before himself as the goal of his efforts the realization of the kingdom of God or the brotherhood of man; must form his thought and centre his activity upon these ideals. Prayer and meditation, if they are to have a place in life at all, must make no such claim as will seriously detract from the time available for action. Every hour they monopolize must show fruit in enhanced efficiency if it is to be accounted anything but wasted. This is the plea of the champion of “service.” Virile, philanthropic, restless in his zeal to do

good, he is jealous of every moment given to prayer; he tolerates it simply as a tonic or stimulant to fit him for new ventures of heroic activity. That in its own nature worship is a service no less heroic than any other, is a sentiment from which his whole being recoils.

If this conclusion of the apostles of energy is accepted, the whole development of Christian thought about the vision of God must be adjudged a wasteful, if not a tragic, mistake. Selfish the ideal of seeing God may not be; erroneous it is. It mistakes the means for the end, and in so doing veils the true end from men's eyes. It diverts them from the king's highway of loving energy into a maze of contemplative prayer wholly remote from God's purposes. Unless I am wholly at fault, that is how robust common sense, even among Christians, has always regarded, and to-day more than ever regards, those who insist that worship or contemplation has the primary place in the ideal life. Its test is wholly pragmatic. If it uplifts, then, but only then, is worship commendable; if it strengthens and purifies, so far, but only so far, has it a place. But it has no value for its own sake, or apart from these possible influences which it may exert. And in any case a little of it goes a long way; it must never be allowed to oust positive benevolence from its position as the Christian's first, final, and only genuine duty.

This is a serious criticism: but even so the Christian tradition of the vision of God seems to have a message for the restless energizers of the modern world, with their problems, programmes, and calls to discipleship. The concept of service embraces two very different ideas. Only one of these is Christian—indeed, only one of them realizes the ideal of service at all; for service of the other kind is self-destructive and nugatory. For the purposes of the present discussion, they may be called the *service of humility*, and the *service of patronage*. It should not be difficult to see that only the former of these two has real

worth. Once this is recognized, it becomes not unreasonable to suggest that worship alone guarantees to service that quality of humility without which it is no service at all; and therefore that worship may claim and must be allowed a substantive position in the Christian ideal once more. So far from being a selfish goal, worship is the only way to unselfishness which the Christian has at his command.

To serve humanity in the spirit of patronage—as a genius condescending to stupidity, as an expert coming to the help of the inefficient, as a millionaire lavishing gifts upon the destitute—is there anything in the world which breeds more dissension, discontent, just resentment and open revolt than this? The question has only to be asked to be answered; every generation has writhed under the well-meant patronage of Ladies Bountiful. Yet apart from an atmosphere of worship, every act of service avails only to inflate the agent's sense of patronage. He is the doctor, humanity is his patient: he is the Samaritan, his neighbour the crippled wayfarer: he is the instructor, others are merely his pupils. Gratitude (if they show gratitude) only confirms his conviction of his own importance; resentment (if they resent his services) only ministers to the glow of self-esteem with which he comforts himself in secret. The phenomenon has been the commonplace of satirists since the world began. Not only so—we recognize in it as well a principal cause of the divisions of Christendom, of the stultifying of effort, of the disillusionment of enthusiasts. The experts quarrel over rival panaceas; the hierophants jostle each other at the altar; and the more there is of such "service," the less the cause of humanity is in truth served at all.

A man must be blind not to recognize something of himself in this picture; he must be no less callous if he fails to long for the spirit of humility. But humility cannot be acquired by taking thought for oneself; that way,

as St. Paul's condemnation of the law has once for all made clear, lie only the alternatives of pride and despair. The way of worship is the only way left open. Even worship is not altogether exempt from the dangers of pride and despair. But in so far as contemplation, or worship, is to be distinguished from service—and the distinction is one which the world has agreed to make—it is surely true to say that contemplation ministers to humility just as service ministers to patronage. The man who "serves"—who plans, and organizes, and issues instructions, advice or exhortation—is doing so from the vantage ground of independence. He thinks of himself as a free agent, dowered with talents to be employed for the benefit of others. In worship, on the contrary, the worshipper puts himself in an attitude of dependence. In looking towards God, who is All in All, he sees himself to be nothing; in worshipping his Redeemer, he knows himself incapable of redeeming even the least of God's creatures. The most he can hope for is that God will deign to use him for the forwarding of His high designs. Worship tells us much good of God, but little good of ourselves, except that we are the work of God's hands. For that we may praise Him, but it leaves us nothing upon which to pride ourselves.

*

FROM SELF TO GOD

In this lovely passage from Creative Prayer, Mrs. Herman shows how we may progress from a prayer life that tends to be self-centred, to prayer that centres our life in God, and opens up to us a new world of spiritual reality.

In defining the essence of prayer as the soul's loving intercourse with God, and its primary condition as detachment from self and attachment to the Divine Friend, we seem to lay ourselves open to the objection that such inter-

course issues in a dreamy mysticism, and results in a view of life which reduces the world to "a garden-seat whereon the soul may make love to God." Life becomes a *solitude à deux*, and pious absorption in God proves to be as selfish an affair as romantic absorption in a beloved human.

The validity of this objection depends entirely, however, upon the conception of God which is involved. If God is seen merely as the great Other, the soul's Divine Counterpart; if, in short, our attachment to Him is conceived of in terms of romance, then prayer must logically lead us into a cloistered and somewhat sickly pietism out of relation to the world and its needs. But so to conceive of God is to hold converse with a phantom. God is not merely the mystic Lover: He is the Centre of a whole world of eternal reality, and prayer involves the soul's discovery of that world and its progressive adjustment to its new environment. This implies activity of the highest order—activity in which mind, will and emotion work together at their highest potency. If, further, we define God as creative and redeeming Love, His world of reality becomes the scene of His creative and redemptive activity; and prayer, so far from alienating us from humanity, will give us a new understanding of it, and a new concern for its destiny. It will commit us to take our share in the plan and purpose of a God who so loved the world that He gave Himself for its redeeming. As we pray we shall, like George Fox, be "baptized into a sense of the conditions and needs of all men."

But while creative prayer must result in a passion for humanity, it must begin with a single eye towards God. At the beginning of our prayer life we are self-centred. Prayer means little more to us than "asking." We ask for personal favours, for blessings upon ourselves and those belonging to us. In our prayer vocabulary personal pronouns occupy a disproportionate place. It is *my* needs, *my* relations, *my* friends; and even when we go further

afield and pray for those whom we have never seen, it is because their needs have been so presented to us as to stir our sympathies and appeal to our idiosyncrasies. In the last resort, we still make use of God in prayer. What altruism we have is temperamental, and remains uninformed by a deep view of God and man, and limited by our natural affinities; our prayer, in fact, remains essentially self-centred. And it belongs to the pathos of our spiritual pilgrimage that so many sincere and noble souls never seem to get beyond the prayer of self-regard and self-reference.

Moreover, many of the new methods of prayer which profess to deliver us from the prison-house of self are seen, upon closer analysis, to be but subtle variations of the self-centred prayer. Not a few leaders of fashionable prayer-cults make a point of insisting on complete concentration upon God as the prime condition of success. Human need, they urge, must be forgotten entirely. The devotee must, by intense mental abstraction and concentration, ascend to heavenly places, and think only of God in His inalienable omnipotence, indestructible peace and inextinguishable joy. Only so shall His victorious and health-giving power be communicated to us, and through us to those for whom we pray. But all the time the motive of this "giving out of oneself into God" is to gain relief from trouble, sickness, or sin. No less than frankly self-centred prayer, these cults make God not an end, but a means to an end. They name God and intend self. They are on a level with the procedure of jaded Society women, who seek to forget the fretting ambitions and worries of the "season" by steeping themselves in the regenerating simplicities of Nature—not, forsooth, because they love Nature, but in order to bring back lustre to dull eyes, and a healthy glow to faded complexions.

But in the normal course of our spiritual growth, there comes a time when the centre of prayer shifts from self

to God. Petition, in its narrower sense, recedes. True, it is not excluded, for nothing that touches us can be indifferent to our Father in Heaven; and our Lord Himself had a special love for plain, forthright, "unmystical" folk, who asked God for what they wanted, as simply and frankly as they would ask their neighbour to help them out in a domestic emergency. But petition will no longer be the pivot upon which prayer turns. The true motive power will now be to get nearer God, to know Him better, to experience His friendship, to enter more fully into His thoughts and purposes.

Self-centred prayer leaves us exposed to a thousand doubts and fears. Experience gives the lie to theory, and the sense of blessings withheld and requests ungranted lays a choking hand upon faith. We know not how to answer the sceptic who reminds us that his child, for whom he did not pray, recovered, while ours died. Books fail to reassure us, and we wonder if prayer is, after all, no more than a process of auto-suggestion. And all the time it is our fundamental attitude that is at fault. Prayer is simply intelligent, purposeful, devoted contact with God. Where that contact is established and sustained, prayer will "work" infallibly, according to its own inherent laws. But such contact cannot be established until we see God as the centre of an eternal world of love in which we have citizen rights and duties, and until we act upon that vision.

We need devise no elaborate theory or method of God-centred prayer. There is only one "rubric"—*the lifting up to God of our honest desire to know Him and to be made one with Him*. God-conscious prayer at its highest involves honest thinking, and a firm resolution to bring all our problems to the searchlight of His truth and to submit all our work to the touchstone of His interests and intentions. A lifelong discipline—intellectual, spiritual and moral—is needed before we can call ourselves adepts in

creative prayer. Yet the least gifted and most poorly equipped soul can attain mastery in it; for, from first to last, simple, honest desire for the love and fellowship of God is the hierophant of all its mysteries.

God-centred prayer, then, means to enter the world of reality. It may be defined as a progressive revaluation of the whole of life in accordance with a revolutionary experience which we have called the shifting of centres; but it is far better to approach it more simply, and conceive of it as a living way—the way of Love. For that world of reality of which God is the centre is the world of enduring and victorious Love, and its highway—the great orientating path that gives it coherence—is Christ. “Thy life is our way,” says Thomas à Kempis; and the life of Christ in its eternal significance is indeed at once the way which each individual disciple has to tread, and the way of God in human history.

We are here in the region of that mystical “Christ-process”—the recapitulation of the birth, life and death of Christ by the individual soul—which seems so remote and confusing to the plain man, largely because its exponents have clothed it in a difficult and esoteric jargon. But, in reality, it is quite simple—difficult, indeed, as all great things are difficult, but never remote from life or inaccessible to the average intelligence. It means that Christ did not come merely to be our Example or our Guide, but to live a new kind of human life, and to live it in such a way that each of us can live it after Him in individual fashion. His life—the new order of living which He initiated—is a way, a path, the key to a new world. It can only be understood by living it after Him; to view it externally is to miss it altogether.

“Were Christ a thousand times in Bethlehem born,
But not in thee,
Still wert thou all forlorn!”

We know that is true. We may say that there is nothing mystical about it, that it simply means that we must have the spirit of Christ; but what could be more mystical than having this spirit of Christ—what more mystical, indeed, than the birth of love of whatever kind within the soul? How is this spirit possessed? The intellect cannot convey it to the life; mere willing cannot conjure it from the eternal deeps; burning emotion cannot fix it into our nature as an enduring principle. Proximity to Christ, whether literal or mental, cannot give it to man; else Judas Iscariot must have possessed it, and every theologian be a saint. To say that it comes by prayer, by the lifting up of a humble heart to God, is to say the most mystical thing of all.

It is to affirm that prayer is supernatural. We shrink from the term "supernatural," and it may be conceded at once that what we have called the supernatural life of prayer is truly natural, if Nature be taken to include the Divine-Human as incarnate in Christ. But just as human thought and emotion are "supernatural" with reference to the brute creation, so the life of creative prayer is supernatural in regard to the life we conventionally term human. Its impulse and sustaining power come from beyond man. It is a Divine mystery—the mystery of the birth and life, the dying and rising again, of Christ, recapitulated in the soul that prays. We need not describe this mystery in high-sounding terms; each event represents a stage in the process of the shifting of centres, the pilgrimage of the soul from itself to God.

Let us seek to trace this Way, which is Christ. Assuming that we have had some experience of self-centred prayer—genuine and fruitful as far as it went, yet essentially self-regarding—there comes a time when this way of prayer no longer suffices. The awakening may come through the intellect, or through the deeper emotions. It may be a sharp pain, or only a dull uneasiness. In any

case, we feel the stirring of that buried life in the deeps below consciousness—the life that lies at once beyond and at the back of reason and will, unrecognized by us, yet capable of using our faculties. The discovery of this hidden element in our being may at first lead to nothing more than a revolt against institutional religion. We feel unsatisfied with what Churches and religious systems have to offer. These things do not meet our new need; the remedies they possess do not touch the aching nerve of our being. At this stage we shall be tempted to turn from organized forms of spirituality, and to seek refuge from the repugnances of the corporate Body of Christ in the solitude of our own spirits. In this there is danger, however. It is but a plausible version of the Satanic temptation, “If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down, for He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee.” Our safety lies, not in separation, but in loyalty. It is precisely when the Church appears to have least to offer us, that our wisdom lies most surely in remaining within her courts; for we may be certain that the soul that finds nothing but emptiness within the collective experience and life of believers will find nothing but hallucination and delusion within its solitary self.

In such hours we need the utmost self-restraint, and the most humble attention to the voice of God. We do not know what is being wrought in us; we cannot see the Holy Thing that will surely be brought to birth, if only we say from our hearts, “Be it unto me according to Thy word.” All we are conscious of is restlessness, dissatisfaction, peevishness. The house of selfhood is being demolished over our heads. What satisfied us before inspires us now with weariness and distaste. The shell of natural religiousness has cracked, and our unloveliness obtrudes. We are drawn to pray in the Spirit, but realize that there can be no “my” or “mine” in such prayer, whereas we are full of “my” and “mine.” It is a period

of painful incubation which may be spoilt by a single touch of self-will. Nothing avails here but perfect docility. A demand is being made upon us—the demand for obedience, and for that royal generosity which gives all for all, asking nothing back—and our response to that demand will depend upon our willingness to cease from self, and upon our loyalty to that deeper life whose stirrings we can only half understand.

Then, perhaps by a sudden, sharp invasion of a new life flooding ours from without, as it were, or by the sudden rising of the flood from within the deeps of the spirit—probably by the meeting of both—we become conscious of the birth of the Christ-spirit within ourselves, and of our own birth into a new and wonderful world. Or the process may be of the most gentle and almost imperceptible nature. A brooding stillness about us, the coming of light we know not how, the sacramental renewal of soul by an element that dropped upon it as silently as manna, and in as impenetrable a night of obscurity—in these, and in countless other ways, some of them inexpressible in words, the new life comes. But however it comes, it means the soul's emergence into a world familiar yet almost frighteningly unfamiliar—a world in which we feel utterly strange and awkward, and which we yet recognize as our true home.

It is the world of which God is the centre. We look upon Him, and our life is renewed. We are given a set of new values, a spiritual coinage other than that with which we have hitherto traded. Things that but a little while ago seemed desirable now appear as dross. Things we recently dubbed "queer" and fanciful suddenly become entirely natural and solidly substantial. We discover untold beauties in God; we find in Christ secrets of final restitution that fill us with deathless hope. Matter is seen to be the store-house of unguessed spiritual treasure, a hiding-place of holy powers, a laboratory of Divine alchemy. Everywhere we see mysteries of healing and

regeneration, of individual transfiguration and of world renewal that remained hidden while self was our centre. And as these revelations unfold themselves, the world we once lived in appears as a shrivelled shell, a mere travesty of reality mocking us with its pathetic makeshifts for power and joy. We have become dead to a whole universe of delights and sorrows, and alive to an entirely different range of thoughts and emotions. It is as though we had developed a new set of faculties of appreciation and distaste, pleasure and pain.

While our birth into the new world is full of Bethlehem joys, it also, like Bethlehem, involves a sword that shall pierce us through. Our friends and neighbours cannot understand the thing that has come to pass in us. They call us queer, unreasonable, altogether irritating, if not enraging. Scarcely has the angel's song died away, when we hear behind us the footfall of our kinsfolk who will call us mad, and of our enemies who say, "He hath a devil." This spells pain, but it is a wholesome pain. It wakes us out of our selfish preoccupation with our experience, and forces us to take our brethren into our thought. Above all, it puts the reality of our experience to the test. Every genuine experience of new life in Christ has this in common with the sterile extravagances of religious self-delusion: that both excite the ridicule and opposition of the worldly and of the merely conventionally religious. Both beget a sense of loneliness, and plunge the soul, fresh from the glow and rhythm of its rapture, into the chilling waters of petty criticism. And it is the manner in which we meet this check to our new-found joy that proves the validity or otherwise of our experience. The soul that has passed through a merely æsthetic and emotional process will either be betrayed into hostility against its critics, or it may take refuge in the calm contempt of the artist for the Philistine, wrapping itself in its own sensations and ignoring the jibes of the vulgar herd. But he in whom the

Christ has been born knows neither resentment nor contempt. So far from allowing his spiritual experience to alienate him from his brethren, he sees in their misunderstanding of him an added claim upon his sympathy. For as Christ was born into the world, not to stand apart from the common life of man as a judge, but to share it as a brother, subjecting Himself joyfully to all the limitations and pains such a fellowship involved, so he in whom Christ's spirit dwells will steadfastly refuse any form of religious or mystical exaltation that releases him from the hampering influence of common relationships. The dull-souled who sneer and jibe at him, and the ill-willed who meet him with anger and malice, will have no judge more lenient, no interpreter more sympathetic, than the subject of their ridicule or enmity. At the very threshold of a sharply individual experience, the soul that is truly submitted to God will realize its oneness with all men. It is not a question of cultivating the corporate feeling, as if it were something superadded to a man's experience of Christ. God sees us not merely as individuals, but also in an ideal relation to our fellows; and as the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, we shall freely and generously identify ourselves with the weakest and most wayward, bearing their burdens and taking them into the very centre of our prayers. The self-deluded soul goes forth in search of a spiritual romance, an emotional adventure that exalts it above other souls; but the soul in whose depths Christ is truly born covets no spiritual privileges that make for isolation, refusing to be made perfect without its fellows. Here is the final test of religious experience. No matter how glorious the soul's adventure be, whether in the realm of mystic feeling or intellectual apprehension, if it does not mean a passing out of self into that life of God which is world-embracing love, it is nothing, and worse than nothing. When we adopt the language of the mystics and represent the soul's pilgrimage as a "recapitulation" of

the life of its Lord, we do so because that life was fundamentally a surrender of self, and each event in it a stage in the process of deepening surrender.

Mystics have erred in treating of the Christ-process as if it exhausted all spiritual experience, instead of representing only one of several ways of symbolizing that experience, and also in applying the events of our Lord's life in rigid sequence and pedantic detail to the life of the soul. Needless to say, such a procedure is artificial, and calculated to prejudice sensible people. There are as many ways of recapitulating Christ as there are souls. To some the Transfiguration, for instance, will become a centre of experience, leaving its mark upon the whole life. Others will, at some great crisis of their lives, be remade by the reality embodied in our Lord's Temptation in the wilderness. One will appropriate the mystery of Cana, and find the secret that turns all life's water to wine; another will be initiated into the sacrament of the Baptism in Jordan. Some find nearly every event of Christ's life reflected in their experience; while many more can trace no such detailed correspondence; and yet are able to say with St. Paul that they were crucified with Christ and are risen again with Him. The one universal element which pervades all experience is the emergence of a new life, with standards and values of its own, involving a progressive discipline, in which the self-principle is slowly put to death, and God becomes the centre of the whole life.

PART TWO

THE DIFFICULTIES THAT HINDER

INTRODUCTION

THE patience and humility of Christ's love is revealed in His saying to His disciples, "I have many things to say to you, but ye are not yet able to receive them." There is neither impatience nor contempt for the dullness of their minds, or the paucity of their faith and love, but a perfect understanding of their limitations and a great outgoing to them of His compassionate love. Tirelessly He sought to help them to enlarge their mental grasp, to help them through their spiritual blunderings and difficulties, lifting them above the egotism that made them quarrel about their relative importance in the Kingdom, until their restless hearts could find rest in God.

One of the dangers of surveying the altitudes to which prayer leads is that the study may hinder instead of help us, may discourage instead of inspire us. Having in the last chapter seen what prayer in its purest form is, we may feel that our own mental limitations and lack of spiritual awareness are such that we shall be discouraged and think that the way of prayer is not for us. This is to forget, however, that the great masters of prayer had to wrestle with difficulties in the beginning of their spiritual life. We must not interpret the words of Jesus, "Seek and ye shall find," as a promise to the languid, or as though the seeking were easy and effortless. What we do need to remember is the great claim of Jesus, which is the beginning and the end of all Christian adventure, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Such patient love and understanding as Jesus manifested is a reflection of the love and patience of God. God is not only very compassionate concerning our imperfections but is seeking to help us to overcome them; and we must not be discouraged if we are

visited by doubts and periods of "dryness" in our prayer life. All who have truly found God have passed through similar experiences—indeed, as we shall see, the great masters of the spiritual life have come to look upon such difficulties as an inevitable and disciplinary element in our search for God.

After reaching what was, in a sense, the end of our study of prayer, we will now begin at a much humbler level, and survey some of the difficulties that may hinder us from praying effectively.

CHAPTER SEVEN

INTELLECTUAL DIFFICULTIES

ONE of the things that modern psychology has helped us to understand is the unreality of many of our intellectual difficulties about religion. It is so easy, when we are confronted by a moral challenge, to escape by posing as people who are intellectually confused or dissatisfied. This "pose" is often adopted unwittingly, and it requires some self-examination to perceive its insincerity. But the solution of our intellectual difficulties may be found in what has well been called "the will to accept the consequences that belief implies": that is, of doing what we know God, if God is like Christ, would want us to do. As Jesus said, "Whosoever will do the doctrine shall know that it is of God."

To say this, however, is not to suggest that there are no genuine intellectual difficulties. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says, "He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that seek after Him." But our environment may be such as to hamper our belief in God. If we are surrounded by people who wholly ignore God their unbelief may, unless we take steps to counteract it, affect our faith. The prevailing temper of our time is sceptical and secularist, and that fact makes faith in God a little more difficult. It is valuable to consider, therefore, the reasonableness and intellectual validity of belief in God, as a check to the sceptical influences that might otherwise invade us and weaken our faith.

No attempt is made here to deal in any complete way with the intellectual problems raised by prayer. Even if

space should permit, it would not be necessary in a book of this kind. We do, however, include a brief chapter on this aspect of our subject as an assurance that prayer can be justified on reasonable grounds (although that fact in itself would not inspire a man to pray), and as a reminder to the reader of the large number of able modern books that deal helpfully with such questions.



SOME COMMON PROBLEMS

Won't God supply our needs without being asked? Can we believe in prayer in a world of order revealed by science? About these and similar questions many books have been written. We do not attempt to deal with them exhaustively, but this passage from the pen of Rev. W. E. Sangster gives a clear summary of the answers.

A man went into a telephone-box one day to ring up a friend. In the midst of his conversation he heard the door open behind him, and a childish voice exclaim:

"Oh, mamma! Here's a man talking to himself."

Many people think like that about prayer. They believe that people who pray are self-deceived. They doubt if any of the praise or petition poured out into space finds an echo in the heart of God. They even suggest that prayer is incompatible with the first principles of the Christian faith.

If God is love, they argue, why need we pray at all, unless it be the simple and solitary prayer, "Thy Will be done." Even if some deep instinct moves us to pray for ourselves, why need we pray for others? Do we love them more than God does? Has He forgotten, that He needs our reminder to freshen His memory? Has He lost interest, that He needs our persuasion to quicken His help? Is He in ignorance, that He needs our knowledge to increase His own? If God is good, and can give a man a blessing, why need He wait till another mortal begs Him to act?

Moreover, these critics assert, we live in a world of law. God does not tinker with His universe in response to the plea of creatures who cannot possibly realize all the repercussions of any one act. It would not be for our good if He did. Science and progress are only possible as He maintains the system, and the maintenance of the system requires a loving disregard of many prayers. The only fitting relationship of creatures to such a gracious Creator is one of trustful submission, and that leaves no room for pleading prayer at all. They would counsel us, in all the vicissitudes of life, to bow the head and say with Eli: "It is the Lord: let Him do what seemeth Him good."

Let us look at some of these difficult questions and see if we have a satisfying answer to them.

Ought we always to submit to things as they are, and assume that that is the Will of God?

Most certainly not! All that we know of God's character as revealed in Jesus rebels against the idea that things as they are represent the perfect will of God. Sin, disease, poverty, war, are all antagonistic to the Divine purpose, and if He suffers them for a while it is only out of respect for our freedom, and that, as we work with Him for their conquest, we may develop such natures as can hold fellowship with the Holy God.

It may seem humble and deeply reverent to say, "Whatever is, is best," but it is moral suicide. To assert our wills in work and prayer against entrenched evils is not to oppose but to express the will of the Father. To acquiesce in a situation which grieves the heart of God, and then cloak our sloth in piety and call it "submission," is dangerously near to blasphemy. There is a map of the Holy Land before me as I write, and my eye lights on Penuel. What thoughts that name conjures up! God wrestled with Jacob at Penuel, not to vanquish him, but "to educe the man." He opposed him that He might aid him. He became his Adversary that He might be his

Confederate. It is not dissimilar in His dealings with us. He has set us in a world which every honest man admits to be a hard school, but it is a school and not an asylum. The process is educative and the aim a noble character. We do not displease God when we oppose the press of evil circumstances: we echo the longings of His own heart. "Thy will be done" does not mean the fatalistic acceptance of life that is common with the Mohammedan, but a great co-operative effort with God to beat down evil and build Jerusalem in England's green and pleasant land.

When H. V. Morton went to Baniyas, the village which used to be called Cæsarea Philippi and where the Apostles first fully realized that Jesus was the Christ, he saw lying in the road what appeared to be an old garment which someone had thrown away. Imagine his horror, therefore, when the object moved and turned out to be a dog dying of hunger. He describes her as "grotesque and misshapen with suffering," and too weak to shake the flies from her sores.

Morton blazed with anger. He says, "the utter callousness of the Mohammedan for the suffering of animals is a terrible thing." The villagers would neither feed the poor creature nor kill it. In answer to his protestations they shrugged their shoulders and said, "It is the will of Allah." Do we believe that that is the will of God? Can we suppose that the loving Father, who made the faithful dog as certainly as He made us, and whose tender mercies are over all His works, could look with indifference on the sufferings of that poor creature?

Morton did everything he could for the dog's comfort, even to the extent of obtaining her a place in the kennels of the S.P.C.A. in Jerusalem, and there, finally, she died.

Who did the will of God, the callous, ignorant people who accepted the dog's plight as part of the proper order of things, or the man who opposed the evil situation and tried to put it right?

Submission cannot be utterly excluded from prayer, but as P. T. Forsyth said: "Let us keep the submission in reserve rather than in action, as a ground tone rather than the sole effect."

Does the goodness of God make prayer unnecessary?

It is a very crude and immature mind which can suppose that God's love is fickle and needs reviving, or His memory uncertain and needs refreshing. The love that went to Calvary, and the watchful care which neither slumbers nor sleeps, does not depend on prayers for its maintenance, and only the callow would suppose it did.

Nevertheless, though it is not necessary to pray in order to quicken the Divine affection or inform the Divine mind, it is still necessary to pray.

Prayer is more than petition. It is fellowship and communion. It is the expression of a personal relationship. It is to be thought of in terms of Father and child. Though a good father provides for the material needs of his child, such provision is but a tiny part of their relationship. The best things a father has to give depend upon the open-mindedness and responsiveness of the child. You cannot give an education like you can give a suit of clothes. You cannot give character as you can give a loaf.

Education and character are not *given* simply. They are acquired by co-operation. They are the fine fruit of fellowship and the interaction of minds. So it is with God. To cease to pray because God loves you and will consistently seek your good, is to keep on the lower levels and miss the partnership by which alone you can receive the finest things God has to give. He can still supply material needs, and His unfailing love will ever watch and wait, but the failure to pray will bring an awful penalty. It will insulate us from the best things of all. It will keep us for ever in the kindergarten, and that by our own deliberate will.

There is a little water spider to be found in our ponds and ditches who lives beneath the water's surface in a kind

of diver's bell. This is how he does it. He makes a thimble-shaped case of silk, which he anchors by fine threads to the water-weeds at the bottom of the pond. The orifice is turned downwards. The spider then goes up to the surface and by means of hooked hairs which cover the lower part of his body he entangles, as it were, a little bubble of air, which he carries down and releases inside his little home. The air rises to the top of the bell which he has made and displaces a certain amount of water, and immediately he goes up again for more air and liberates it in the same way. Up and down he goes until, finally, the bell is filled with air and he lives beneath the water's surface something of the life above. As his use exhausts the oxygen he goes up for more, and he maintains his life in an alien environment only by a ceaseless vigilance. Some of us could learn a good deal from the water spider. Our spiritual life can only be properly maintained by a constant correspondence with the spiritual world. Only thus can we live the life of God in an alien environment. The spider dies if he fails to go to the surface, and there is spiritual impoverishment for any man who neglects the privilege of prayer. The marks of his spiritual impoverishment may not appear for a while. He eats as much: he works as well: he commits no crime. But his closest friends feel a difference, and he feels it himself. He loses a certain quality of life, develops a restlessness and disappointment, and is full of vague dissatisfaction. The man whose prayer life is real, and who lives in God, is buoyant still. He awakes in the morning God-conscious: he has reserves of power: the sense of the presence of God is the background of all his thinking and doing: he is full of quiet joys and inward peace.

If you say "God is not real to me, and therefore I do not pray," I reverse your dictum: "You do not pray and therefore God is not real to you."

It may seem devout to say, "God cares for me and

therefore I need not pray," but the devotion belongs only to the appearance. Even if our own selfish and unlovely hearts could be satisfied just to receive and not desire fellowship, it will still remain true that God cannot do His utmost for us unless we pray.

Is there any room left for prayer in a world of science?

The seriousness of this difficulty is felt very acutely by some people. They are impressed by the orderliness of the Universe. Sun, moon and stars are so exact in their working. All we can discover of the laws of nature leaves us feeling that nothing ever affects the regularity of their operation and no room seems left for any prayer that runs counter to the vast system of which mankind is but a part.

Yet even here the problem is more apparent than real. If the ordered scheme of nature is not the movement of some impersonal force, but merely the method by which God works, we cannot suffer the scientist to bow God out of the world which He has made or (conversely) leave Him imprisoned in His own system and incapable of making a Father's response to a child's reasonable plea.

Even while we readily admit that there could be no science or progress in a capricious world, and firmly insist that God does not constantly cobble His universe in answer to the prayers of anxious believers and to the confusion of research students, we do maintain also that within the structure of natural law vast adaptation is possible and a wide margin left for the beneficence that Jesus said we could justly look for in God.

Poor, blind and futile men have achieved so much in this world within those necessary limits that it is not possible to conceive what God can do even while He respects the same limitations. The range of the loudest human voice is but a dot on the earth's surface, but a telephone will carry that voice to the other side of the world, and the wireless will scatter it over all five continents. No law of nature has been broken: this "miracle"

is the fruit of their adaptation. *Men* can do that. What can God do?

The range of the keenest human eye is but a step on the earth's surface, but television has already succeeded in making an object a thousand miles away plainly visible, and soon it will become a commonplace of everyday life. The laws of nature have not been violated. If men can make such marvels in a fixed and scientific world, what limit can be put to the activity of God, even though, in infinite wisdom, He always respects the laws which He has made?

It was not a minister of religion, but a man eminent in science who said: "Religious people seem to be losing some of their faith in prayer: they think it scientific not to pray in the sense of simple petition. They may be right; it may be the highest attitude never to seek for anything specific, only for acquiescence. If saints feel so they are undoubtedly right; but so far as ordinary science has anything to say to the contrary, a more childlike attitude might turn out truer, more in accordance with the total scheme."¹

There are times doubtless when, in ignorance, we pray for things we cannot have, and the only answer love can give us is "No!" That is the proper hour for submission. But science has not yet proven that God's methods in this world make our prayers a blind impertinence, nor has intellect undermined the petitioner's hope.

I went once into the engine shed at the Crewe Railway Works and saw the mighty locomotives being made. Engines weighing over a hundred tons were actually suspended in the air during part of the process, and men were working on them as they hung above the rails.

I noticed also that if a great weight had to be moved, or a workman needed another tool, he would look up to the roof and the weight would be lifted or the tool put

¹ Sir Oliver Lodge.

near his hand. This was how it was done. A man was operating a powerful crane just underneath the roof. He understood the signals given from below and moved his machinery to meet the need.

It seemed a simple parable of how God works. He keeps His laws, but is not chained by them. He is the Creator and Sustainer of all that is—and a Father too!

Does prayer presume that there is partiality in God?

Some people entertain the idea that God has favourites. They do not doubt His existence or His beneficence, but they think that His beneficence runs in definite channels. They seem to suppose that He is like the unfair foreman concerning whom the workman said: "If he likes you, you are all right, and if he doesn't . . ."

Nothing in the scripture sustains this view. There are passages in the Old Testament which seem at first to support it, but the plain statements of the Bible are against this belief. Christ said, "He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."¹

These are the simple facts which give an appearance of probability to this complaint. The spiritual laws operative in the universe ensure that those people who put value on spiritual things gain a spiritual reward. They are living in harmony with God's will and, because His universe is at heart benign, they reap their reward.

The judgments of God are ever working out in His silent, impeccable way. The mistakes which mar all human tribunals have no place here. Loyalty to His purposes, so far as they are understood, brings a rich reward of interior peace and many other blessings as well: sin brings its inevitable punishments by those same inescapable laws.

But is this partiality? One might as justly accuse the

¹ Matt. v. 45. Cf. Luke xiii. 1-5 and John ix. 2, 3.

law of causation of being partial, as to take up arms against God on a plea like this.

Nor is it different with prayer. As we have argued, the most precious things God has to give can only be imparted to responsive minds. He cannot force soul-culture on a barricaded heart. Prayer removes the barricade. It allows Him to do what He is longing to do. His heart is warm to all His children, but only those who pray give His love the fullest opportunity.

The rainfall of Western India is very curious. Along the coast from Bombay to Cape Comorin the rainfall is very heavy: North of Bombay and all over the terrible desert of Thar it is negligible. The same moisture-laden winds blow over both areas alike, but with this significant difference. South of Bombay the Western Ghats strain towards the skies, condense the clouds, and bring the water down. North of Bombay the mountains peter out: the earth does not aspire: the South-West monsoon, laden with water from the Arabian Sea, sweeps over the thirsty land, but gives no rain in all that parched area until it reaches the Himalayas.

It is not dissimilar with the blessings of God. Winds, "big with mercy," blow above the prayerful and the prayerless alike with this vast difference. One lifts praying hands to heaven and brings the blessing down; the others do not aspire and therefore do not experience. But there is no caprice in God. Prayer gives Him the opportunity which He never fails to take.

*

IF GOD IS GOOD WHY NEED WE ASK AT ALL?

Dr. James Reid, in his book, The Temple in the Heart, answers a little more fully the question why it is necessary to pray if God knows what we need.

If God knows what we need before we ask Him, why

tell Him? Why should we need to put our desires into words? There is this further question, also, that has troubled many people. If God is so ready to give, why should He wait for our prayers? Why should we need to pray at all? A mother does not wait for her little child's requests. He cannot always put them into words. He does not always know what he really wants or needs. But her love is ever watchful, and she knows and supplies it. If we then know and supply our children's needs without their asking, why not God? Why should we need to ask?

There are, of course, a good many things that come to us without our asking for them. When we are born we come into a home prepared for us. All we need is ready to hand. Many, indeed, go through life in that condition. They hardly need to ask for anything. It is all supplied, so that they are scarcely conscious of any needs at all. They never know what it is to be in want of food. They have never had any difficulty in getting clothes or furniture, or any other thing. But this is not a healthy condition. A millionaire was walking with a friend along a city street, when they stopped to look into a window full of expensive jewels. "I would give much," said the rich man, "if I could see something that I could not buy." If all our wants were supplied as if by magic, without any effort on our part, life would become very stale. It is the sense of need and the effort to satisfy it that gives to life most of its zest. The sense of need may be very painful, but it has inspired man's creative efforts and made possible his finest discoveries. Why did not God supply us with electric light all ready-made? Why did we have to learn the secrets of medicine by slow and painful groping? The reason must be that by the need and the effort to discover and invent, there are capacities of mind developed which could have been awakened no other way. God trains us through the needs that life awakens. Is it not

the very sense of need which opens our minds to the existence of God Himself?

“ ‘There is no God,’ the foolish saith,
But none, ‘There is no sorrow.’
And nature oft the cry of faith
In bitter need will borrow.”

The consciousness of God comes to birth within us in a prayer of need which trouble or sorrow wrings from the heart.

Even though it be for nothing else than to bring us to God, it is good that we should need to pray. Otherwise we might never know Him. He might remain undiscovered, as electricity would have been had man been content with tallow candles. To have communion with God is the real fruit of prayer. Even if none of our petitions were answered, it would be reward enough to have come into touch with Him. For our greatest need is God Himself. St. Augustine was right when he prayed, “Come, O Lord, in much mercy down into my soul, and take possession and dwell there. Give me Thine own self, without which, though Thou shouldst give me all that ever Thou hast made, yet could not my desires be satisfied.” God’s greatest gift is Himself. But we would not have found Him had not the sense of need brought us to seek Him.

There is something more to be said. Prayer would not have been our deepest impulse if God had not needed our prayers. The door by which God enters our life opens from our side, and prayer is the lifting of the latch. God needs our prayers to make it possible for Him to give us His best. There are things we cannot give others until they want them and feel the need of them. All parents know this by bitter experience. They can give their children food and clothing without their asking them. But the best things cannot be given to them till they want them. We cannot give our children advice if they do not

want it. We cannot give them a real education until they desire it. There are secrets we long to tell them, and guiding we would like to give them. But if they do not feel the need of it and are not willing to learn, we are helpless. A famous violinist had a daughter who went to learn music from a stranger. Someone asked the father if he would not like to teach his daughter himself. "There is nothing I would like more," he said, "but I must wait till she asks me. There are things I cannot impart to her till she is ready for them and comes to ask for them."

Is it not the same with us and God? There are things He wants to give us. But He cannot impart them till we are ready to receive them. He cannot help us till we want His help, which means that we have discovered our helplessness. He cannot give us His Spirit till we have found out how unlike Christ we really are. He cannot draw us from the pit of selfishness or pride till we have become conscious of our plight, and in despair have stretched out a hand that He can grasp. For that moment He stands waiting with all the resources of His love.



THE MYSTERY OF INTERCESSION

Intercessory prayer also raises many questions in the mind. Some of them disappear when we remember that we are not entirely separate individuals, but "members one of another," as St. Paul said. Our economic interdependence is only an aspect of our spiritual unity, and as we can give or withhold on the material level, it is not strange that we should be able to help—or hinder—each other by our use or neglect of prayer. Of course the efficacy of intercessory prayer does not depend upon our ability to explain how it operates, but we cannot help speculating. In this passage Canon Lindsay Dewar suggests one possible line of explanation.

Is it possible to gain any understanding of the manner in which prayer "works"? Some may perhaps think that the subject is too profound and obscure for our minds to comprehend. Possibly this is the case. Nevertheless, it is our duty to make the attempt, especially as the New Testament provides us with a very clear example of the interlocking of prayer and Providence. I refer to the incident of St. Peter and Cornelius in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts x. 1-xi. 18). The situation was as follows: In Cæsarea there lived a Roman centurion (an officer roughly corresponding to a subaltern in the British army) who belonged to the group known as "god-fearers," who were attached to the synagogue in those places where non-Jews abounded. These persons were not proselytes, i.e. they were not circumcised and therefore not partakers of the privileges of Judaism, but they were allowed to attend the synagogue services. This they did, because they were attracted by the purity and nobility of the Jewish religion. They were, however, "outside the pale" in the eyes of the Jews, and there can be little doubt that they felt very keenly the unsatisfactory nature of their position.

Cornelius, being a devoutly religious man, would feel it all the more. He would feel that he was being excluded from the full privileges of religion without sufficient reason. It was, therefore, natural that he should make this question a matter of earnest prayer. He did so, and we are told that one day he experienced a vision in which he was assured that his prayer for religious recognition had been "answered," and that he was to send to Joppa—some thirty miles away—for a man called Simon, who was staying there with another called Simon, a tanner. Without delay he sent to fetch Peter. As the party approached Joppa, St. Peter went on to the flat roof of his house for his midday prayers. When they were finished, and he was waiting for his midday meal, he dropped off to sleep and had a dream in which he saw a mainsail (that is what the word

means) being let down from heaven. It contained all manner of unclean creatures, and he heard a voice saying, "Rise, Peter, kill and eat." He refused, was rebuked by a Voice (which he knew to be the Voice of God) and he awoke.

While Peter was thinking about the meaning of the dream, there had been a knock at the gate, and Peter became aware that three men had come to see him, and he felt impelled to go downstairs to see them, and "to go with them." We need not recount in detail the rest of the story. The outcome was the first admission of the Gentiles to full equality with the Jews in the Christian Church. The significance of this tremendous event, possibly the greatest event in the history of the world after the Incarnation itself, was not appreciated all at once. The implications of it were, as we know from St. Paul's Epistles, resisted by the Jewish Christians, and even St. Peter had to be rebuked by St. Paul for not holding fast to the principle. Nevertheless, this event represents the result of one of the "decisive battles of the world," although it was fought not on land or sea, but in the human heart. It decisively showed that Christianity was an international religion, knowing no barriers of race.

Its chief importance for our present inquiry, however, is that it seems to throw some light upon the way in which prayer works. First, we notice that Cornelius was praying for something which God very definitely willed, viz., the breaking down of the barriers between Jews and non-Jews. The result of his prayer was a vision and an impulse to send men to Joppa to Simon. It would be interesting to know what was Cornelius's previous knowledge of Simon. We must not assume, I think, that he had never heard of him before. Our experience makes it far more likely that he had. However that may be, the mind of Simon, who also prayed much, was prepared by a dream for his visit to Cæsarea, and when he awoke, the Spirit saith unto him

—or, as we should put it, “something told him”—that there were three men seeking him, and that he should “go with them.” But the Spirit did not tell him why they had come.

We see, once more, from this incident, the great importance which attaches to the subconscious levels of the mind in connection with God’s providential ordering of events. Cornelius was guided by a “vision,” and so was St. Peter, and they both felt “impulses” to perform certain actions. That is to say, God’s “manipulation” of events by means of His obedient children seems to be carried out by “inspirations,” which spring from the unconscious. Our own experience confirms this. Many Christian people have been guided by “impulses” and many have been guided by “visions” since the days of Cornelius and St. Peter. We have to remember that in those times there was no scientific psychology. There was, for example, no distinction drawn between waking visions and dreams, nor between hallucinations and illusions. It is, therefore, quite possible that the “visions” of Cornelius and St. Peter were both, as I have suggested above, ordinary dreams. This point, however, is of secondary importance. The vital considerations are two. First, that God’s primary will was, in this case, fulfilled because there were two people, at least, who were really anxious to do it in this regard. Secondly, God “providentially” ordered events in answer to their prayers by means of inspirations from the subconscious. These inspirations, it is important to observe, came to those who were desirous of fulfilling the Divine will. They do not, therefore, constitute any infringement of man’s power of free choice. There is no question of either St. Peter or Cornelius influencing the other telepathically by means of their intercessions. At least, such influences, supposing them to have been operative, were quite subordinate. They made their prayers to *God*, and the solution of their problem was brought about,

in whatever way, by Him. If, however, either Cornelius or St. Peter had failed to cultivate by persevering prayer their good desires, these would have gradually died out. In that case, the breaking down of the barriers between Jew and Gentile would not have taken place as it did. Yet in course of time doubtless others would have arisen through whom God would have been able to work His will. Since, however, these men whole-heartedly desired to do God's will, He was able to "dispose and turn their hearts as it seemed best unto His godly wisdom."

In making these comments upon the incident of St. Peter and Cornelius I do not, of course, claim that we should necessarily think that *all* intercession "works" in this manner. Plainly, we have no warrant for making any such assertion. My aim has been merely to assist, if possible, those who find it hard to believe in the reasonableness of intercession by drawing attention to the significance of a particular incident which seems to throw some light upon it.

If a person prays rightly, he is deliberately surrendering to God the territory of a single heart. When a group of persons prays, a wider area is thus surrendered. Add together all these strips of land, representing the multitude of devout men and women in the world, and you have a vast tract of country upon which God can, and does, marshal the forces of history.

*

HAS SCIENCE MADE PRAYER OBSOLETE?

Applied science has enabled us to do for ourselves many things about which our fathers prayed. Has this made prayer obsolete? Some psychologists have declared that the beneficial results that spring from prayer are due to auto-suggestion. Is that true? Dr. William Adams Brown

suggests the answer to these questions in his book The Life of Prayer in a World of Science.

The obstacles that make prayer difficult are the familiar foes of vital religion in every age—laziness, selfishness, inattention, carelessness—all the things that make us live for ourselves rather than for others, for our baser instead of for our better self, for the present instead of for the future and for eternity. Whatever makes it hard to believe in God as a present beneficent reality, actually functioning in human life, as self-indulgence always makes it hard, is an obstacle to prayer.

There are special obstacles characteristic of our time which make prayer more than ordinarily difficult for many people.

In many ways science has transformed our world and in the process put obstacles in the way of our praying. These are of two kinds, those that make us feel that prayer is unnecessary, and those that make us feel that it is impossible. They correspond to the two forms in which science meets us, as applied and as pure—a set of tools and a habit of mind. Each bears upon the matter of our present concern and makes it necessary for us to reconsider our previous ideas of what it means to pray.

(1) And first of science as applied. Science has done many wonderful things for us. It has built engines which enable us to race over the earth, steamboats which carry us swiftly across the water, airplanes by which we can fly like the birds, factories in which one man can do the work of a thousand, radio through which one man can speak to millions. But all the specific things that science has done can be summed up in the one sentence that has transformed a static into a fluid universe. The world of a generation ago was a stable world, a world in which what happened yesterday could be expected to happen tomorrow, a world with a fixed status for the individual,

definite classes in society, particular governments to which men owed allegiance, an inerrant Bible, an infallible church. There was change, to be sure, but it took place slowly, so slowly that its significance was hardly perceived. But modern science has enormously accelerated the rate of change and forced its occurrence upon us. It has made changes seem possible on a world-wide scale, and given man powers of which he had not dreamed. In politics it has evoked what we call the democratic consciousness; in religion it has made us familiar with the idea of a progressive and self-governing church. We are not satisfied with the church as it is to-day. We see new possibilities, as yet unrealized, almost undreamed of, and from many different centres we are trying experiments which point the way to something better.

But the older forms of worship provide no adequate expression for this new democratic consciousness. The religion of our fathers, as we have seen, preached acceptance, content, submission to the *status quo*. To-day we are urged to cultivate dissatisfaction, revolt, discontent. So the social movement, coming in conflict with the habits of the church, has become largely, if not altogether, divorced from organized religion, and many, finding no spiritual satisfaction in the forms of prayer as they are now practised in the churches, have come to feel that prayer is superfluous, if not positively harmful. Add to this the change in outward habits, the breakdown of the family, the increase in the number of those who feel no responsibility for regular church attendance, the growing restlessness and love of excitement, and it is not strange that for many prayer should have become a lost art.

Nor is it simply that the object for which we are asked to pray no longer fits in with our present mood, but prayer itself seems often no longer necessary. The things for which our fathers turned to God for help are now seen to be largely in our own control. It is not simply that nature

is fluid, but that you and I can control the channels in which her currents are to flow. Where our fathers went into their closets to pray, we go into our laboratories to experiment and into our factories to create. When the drought came they prayed for rain. We replant the denuded mountain slopes, and the rain comes. When pestilence threatened, they cried to God for healing. We diagnose the cause of the disease and apply the appropriate remedy. Thus slowly but surely man's control over nature is increasing, and his need for prayer, in the older sense of that term, has grown correspondingly less.

(2) But the cause of the difficulty lies deeper still. It grows out of the critical temper of which science is born. Prayer begins when we take God for granted, but science takes nothing for granted, at least not at first, or until verified by repeated experiment. Our historians and critics have been testing the accepted notions of God and religion, and they have found much to reject, still more to question. The Bible pictures God as an individual dealing with other individuals and shaping the course of history and human life according to His good pleasure. Theology has developed this into a theory of the supernatural which makes it a world above and apart from nature, beyond the control of science, yet known to man immediately in experience. The churches have differed in the details of their conception of this supernatural realm. In principle they have agreed, and the God to whom they have prayed has been conceived in terms of arbitrary and incalculable will. But science knows no such world of the unpredictable, and for multitudes its loss has meant the end of prayer.

At first the controversy was about matters more or less external, the Bible, the church, even the person of Jesus Christ. The inner life remained untouched. Here at least one could meet God even if all other props were shaken. But science has not been content to stop here. It has invaded the inner life and brought it too under law. It has

shown us that our subjective states are just as much facts to be studied as the order of an historical sequence or the rise and fall of the tides.

The psychologists have been dissecting the inner life as the botanist dissects a flower. What science discovers, some of them tell us, is a series of activities, succeeding one another as parts of one unbroken process which is itself conditioned at every point by the physical organism with which it is associated, and by which its manifestations are determined. So prayer is resolved into auto-suggestion, and God becomes a by-product of man's changing emotional moods, a projection of his aspirations into the void, a dream picture screened on nothingness.

Here again it is not so much the assured results of science that are fatal to prayer as the temper of mind that it often generates, the questioning, critical attitude that takes nothing for granted; that substitutes the religion of the quest for the religion that has found.

And yet, in spite of the difficulties, inward and outward, mankind keeps on praying. Not always easily, not always with a good conscience; still in moments of crisis and of tragedy the old longing makes itself felt, and the old cry breaks out: Oh, that I might find Him!

What shall we think of this impulse to pray? Two possibilities are open to us. Either we may regard it as an unmeaning survival of which the sensible man will rid himself with the least possible delay; or we may see in it the witness to an unsuspected presence whose method of revealing himself we have not yet adequately fathomed.

As our chief need is to recover our lost sense of God, it would seem natural, first of all, to address ourselves to the theoretical difficulties which make it hard to believe in God.

Thus we may remind ourselves that if there be a God who reveals Himself to man, as religion assumes there is, the way we call prayer would be a natural way for His

revelation to come. We know that our own thoughts and feelings are inwardly determined, yet this knowledge does not affect our conviction that we have genuine relationships with other human beings. Why, then, should the discovery that God works through law lead us to doubt that a genuine self-disclosure of His will is possible? If a belief in determinism is inconsistent with personal initiative and fellowship, then all that we can say is that some highly intelligent men have lived all their lives without finding it out. Determinism and freedom are not necessarily inconsistent.¹ World of law though it be, ours is a universe in which new things are constantly coming to pass. With man creation is a familiar experience. In countless ways we fashion the raw material of our world after patterns which our minds conceive. Why, then, should we conclude that man alone possesses this capacity? Shall the power that produced man be less resourceful than the creature it has produced? But if God, too, be Creator, purposing as well as acting, prayer becomes a most reasonable exercise, for prayer is that form of human experience in which man, the person, communes with the personal God.

It may be pointed out further that the fact that man's understanding of God's revelation has differed is no more reason for doubting God's existence than similar differences in our understanding of the communications of other persons is reason for doubting their existence. All our knowledge of reality is progressive, and we should expect the same rule to apply to our knowledge of God. The fact that we have known God imperfectly in the past and have often formed wrong ideas of His nature and purpose is no more reason for doubting that a fuller and truer knowledge

¹ We have assumed, for the sake of argument, that science shuts us up to a deterministic view of the universe. But it is only fair to point out that many philosophers do not believe this. William James is but one of a long line of thinkers whose observations of life have convinced them that contingency—in the literal sense of that term—is still a factor to be reckoned with. It is not necessary for our present purpose to determine which party in this age-long debate is in the right.

of Him is possible than the fact that our knowledge of the physical universe has been imperfect or wrong in the past is a reason for doubting that we know the world to-day better than Roger Bacon or Galileo. Of this we may be sure: that if we are to grow in understanding of God, we must follow the same method which we use in other realms of knowledge. We must test the inherited wisdom of the past by the fresh insight of each new generation. Each of us for himself must take the best that has come to him in the experience of the race and put it to the proof of his own life. Prayer is the name that religion gives to such individual testing of the highest without by the deepest within.

Modern psychologists have been restudying prayer as a natural phenomenon, and as a result have reclassified the different kinds of prayer according to their relation to the psychological processes which accompany them.

Simplest of all is the prayer which is simply reverie, in which the mind yields itself freely to whatever leadings may come from the subconscious reservoir from which much of our definite thought emerges.

Then there is the prayer of recollection, in which we deliberately recall to memory the best moments in our own past. Prayer in this sense takes the form of the voluntary recollection of those deepest principles of will or preference which the activities of living tend to obscure.¹ In the prayer of recollection the will is active. We confront the self of the moment with the larger and better self we would become.

In prayer as meditation, thought, in the technical psychological sense of that term, comes to its own. In meditation we fix our thought upon the "Other" with whom we have to do. The whole world of our experience, whether it be of nature or of other persons, supplies us with symbols by which we make vivid to consciousness the

¹ Cf. W. E. Hocking, *The Meaning of God in Human Experience* (New Haven, 1912), pp. 405 seq.

presence of this "Other." Like all true thought, our prayer takes the form of discussion. We speak to God and He speaks back to us. We ask Him for what we need and He answers us. Prayer has become intercourse, communion.

One more form remains—the prayer of contemplation. In this our attention is concentrated upon a single object, not conversed with, but enjoyed. We no longer talk to God. We contemplate Him. We no longer hear Him talk to us. We are content to rest in Him, as a child in its mother's arms—to delight in Him as the artist enjoys the harmony of form or the musician loses himself in the beauty of tone. This is the type of prayer after which the mystics aspire. To them prayer has become worship.

Of these four forms of prayer, the two latter have played the largest rôle in historic religion. The prayer of meditation has been most characteristic of the more ethical type of religion; that of contemplation of the more mystical type; but all four kinds of prayer are found in each living religion, and each has something essential to contribute to the life of devotion.

In discussing prayer we must be careful to make clear which of these various types we have in mind. Much which is true of one does not apply to the others, and by our failure to discriminate we involve ourselves in needless perplexities. Above all, we must distinguish between the *phenomena* which psychology describes, and the *inferences* which certain psychologists have drawn from them. To say that prayer is auto-suggestion may mean simply that the way God conveys His will to me is through thoughts which emerge in my consciousness when I am in reverie. On the other hand, it may be my way of describing the fact that God has become for me simply a creature of my own imagination, without any basis in fact. Psychology and metaphysics are two different things. We must take care not to confuse them.

The distinction between the facts observed and the interpretation we put on them becomes especially important when we pass to the second contribution which psychology makes to our understanding of the life of prayer; namely, the account that it gives of the genesis of the prayer experience.

To follow this in detail would carry us too far afield, for it would require us to give an abstract of the more important conclusions of recent psychology. It is sufficient to say that while in the older psychologies consciousness held the centre of the stage, more recent treatises picture it to us as only the final chapter of a longer and more complicated story. The importance of reasoning is not denied, but it is seen to be only the last step in a complex process in which the dominant rôle is played by the instincts and the emotions.

We can illustrate the analytic method of recent psychology by the analogy of physical science. As physics breaks up the wholes we see into their parts and shows how ions and electrons combine to make the atom, and atoms group themselves into the elements which the older physics regarded as ultimate, so some psychologists resolve the self into a bundle of instincts and emotions which attach themselves to objects without and within and group themselves into larger units known as sentiments, dispositions, and complexes. "The sentiments are those psychological groups or constellations which we consciously accept; the dispositions those which are unconsciously accepted; the complexes those which are regarded as unacceptable and tend to be repressed."¹ Through all these complex processes of grouping and regrouping, a single unifying principle makes itself felt, now appearing in consciousness as the self, now living its hidden life in the subterranean caverns of the subconscious.²

¹ J. A. Hadfield, *Psychology and Morals* (New York, 1925), p. 27.

² Cf. A. G. Tansley, *The New Psychology* (New York, 1922), pp. 70-81.

Much study has been given to this subconscious side of our life, and various lists have been made of the instincts and emotions which are the springs of its activity. Different schools of psychologists use different methods in studying it. The Behaviourists have abandoned the introspective method of the older psychology and base their inferences upon the outward changes which they can observe and measure. Introspection, on the other hand, is fundamental in the procedure of the Freudians. They interpret the disorders of the self as the result of repressed complexes, by which they mean "psychological constellations formed by the attachment of the instinctive emotions to objects or experiences in the environment, which, owing to their painful or repugnant character, are unacceptable to the self."¹ Their way of dealing with these complexes is to bring them out into the light, reveal them to the subject who is their victim for what they really are, in the confident expectation that this revelation will of itself bring healing and deliverance. This process of self-revelation—a process in which the interpretation of dreams plays an important part—is known as psychoanalysis.

In the Freudian use of psychoanalysis much is made of the unconscious influence of sex; but this is an incident of the method, not its essence.

It may be admitted that in many cases the self-revelation which psychoanalysis makes possible has proved a curative influence. The practice has by-products, however, which make it dangerous except in the most expert hands. Unwisely used it may turn people's thoughts in instead of out; make them self-conscious and morbid, and foster an analytic habit of mind which inhibits action.

What is true in a peculiar degree of psychoanalysis is true in lesser measure of all preoccupation with the elements of psychic life. One is in danger of resolving the whole into the parts; of losing the forest in the trees.

¹ Hadfield, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

For we live by wholes, not by parts. The realities with which we have to do in daily life are not ions and electrons, but trees and stones and seas and suns and stars; not instincts and emotions, sensations and thoughts; but men and women and children who are thoughtful or angry or grateful as the case may be. We learn to know the real world not only, or even chiefly, by the method of analysis which science uses, but by the intuition of the whole which is the inspiration of religion.

Here, too, psychology has help to give. It points the way to the correction of its own exaggerations by its emphasis on a principle of the highest importance in the personal life; namely, the principle of integration. The trouble with most of us is that we live divided lives. We are played upon by different impulses which war against one another—the desire to possess and the impulse to share; the mood of resentment and the duty of self-control, etc., etc. If we are to realize our best selves these conflicting forces must be unified. We must find something big enough to command us completely. This unification of personality by the co-ordination of all its elements through their relation to a dominant purpose is known as integration.

The purpose of analysis is to make integration possible. We bring the complexes that have been skulking in the dark out into the light; not that we may yield to them, but that we may master them. While they were hidden, we could not control them. When we know them for what they are, we can deal with them as they deserve.

But how are we to deal with them? Here psychology has something very definite to say. We are to deal with them by attaching them to something bigger and stronger than themselves; something objective enough to be felt as real; permanent enough to last; and worthy enough to command our inherent loyalty. We call these objects which command our loyalty, ideals.

We must attach our emotions, I repeat, to some object which is felt as real. This calls attention to another psychological principle of the utmost importance. It is a singular fact that these intangible masters of ours which we call our ideals have power to move us in the measure that we believe them to be rooted in the nature of things. We cannot believe that what seems to us best and noblest is merely our own subjective creation. The highest within reaches out to the highest without, and believes that it has found it.

This instinctive tendency of man to attribute reality to elements in the inner life psychologists call projection. It is a psychological name for the process by which we apprehend wholes as distinct from parts; the self as distinct from its subjective states; God as distinct from the universe which suggests Him. If it be objected that projection is a subjective process, the answer is that it is no more subjective than suggestion or any other process of the mind. If there be a God like ourselves, projection is the method by which we should expect to find Him.

Here is where prayer comes to its own. Prayer brings us into contact with God, and God is the only object in the world big enough and lasting enough and worthy enough to serve as the integrating principle of every human personality.

Psychologists are beginning to realize the importance of the contribution which prayer can make to the integration of personality. In answer to the objection that prayer is auto-suggestion, William Brown, the Wilde Reader on Psychology at Oxford, has this to say:

"Personally, I am disposed to reverse the statement, and to say that auto-suggestion is prayer. Auto-suggestion where it succeeds is, I believe, much more nearly akin to prayer than is generally recognized by those interested only in the treatment of functional nervous disease by suggestion. I mean that it is rarely successful unless the

patient has at least a subconscious belief that 'the universe is friendly.' Auto-suggestion admittedly demands confidence. But what does this mean? Just as the mere fact of seeking for the cause of a particular phenomenon involves as its intellectual basis the tacit assumption of the principle of the uniformity of nature, so I would urge the emotional basis of a particular auto-suggestion is some measure of confidence, implicitly felt if not explicitly confessed, in the general beneficence of the nature of things. In religious natures this confidence expresses itself definitely as faith in God; and, with this explicitly assumed, auto-suggestion is quite clearly a form of prayer."¹

Even more explicit is the testimony of Captain Hadfield to the contribution of religion to mental health. In his book, *The Psychology of Power*, he gives this record of his own experience:

"Speaking as a student of psychotherapy who, as such, has no concern with theology, I am convinced that the Christian religion is one of the most valuable and potent influences that we possess for producing that harmony and peace of mind and that confidence of soul which is needed to bring health and power to a large proportion of nervous patients. In some cases I have attempted to cure nervous patients with suggestions of quietness and confidence, but without success, until I have linked these suggestions on to that faith in the power of God which is the substance of the Christian's confidence and hope. Then the patient has become strong."²

The doctors are beginning to recognize that prayer is one of the factors of which they must take account in their profession. If there were no other reason, the rapid increase in the number of persons who specialize in mental healing would force this recognition. Christian Science, as

¹ William Brown, "The Practice of Prayer" in *Religion and Life* (New York, 1923), pp. 81-96.

² J. A. Hadfield, *The Psychology of Power* (New York, 1924), p. 51.

we have seen, is but the best known of an increasing number of cults which profess through prayer, either that of the patient or of the healer, or of both, to cure disease and restore health. With all allowance for exaggeration due to faulty diagnosis or inaccurate observation, it cannot be denied that the number of persons who have been benefited by treatment of this kind is so great as to raise the question whether we have not here a resource of which we would be wise to make a more extended and careful use. The Roman Catholic Church has long recognized the possibility of healing in answer to prayer, and the story of such a shrine as that of Our Lady of Lourdes would include a surprising number of cures of persons whom the more conventional methods had failed to help. Individual Protestants like Dr. Worcester and Dr. McComb of the Emmanuel Movement have made a practice of treating selected patients by prayer; but up to the present time no adequate concerted effort has been made by Protestants to explore the possibilities of the subject as a whole. A recent study of the relation of religion to health made for the New York Academy of Medicine by Dr. Alice Paulsen shows a rich field waiting to be cultivated.¹

"Piety," said a wise Salesian monk, "is unity."² This is the religious version of the psychological principle of integration. There are many different ways in which to bring about the desired unification of the self. But only religion takes account of all the factors that are necessary to a complete integration. To be perfectly well, all things, both within and without, must work together for our good. But that is possible only if there is something without that answers to the need within, something that is at once without and within; the goal of our effort, the standard of

¹ "Religious Healing," *Journal of the American Medical Association*, May 15, 22, 29, 1926; pp. 1519-1524, 1617-1623, 1692-1697.

² *The Interior Life*, ed. Tissot, Eng. tr. by Mitchell, 1913 (London, 1894), p. 47.

our judgment, the inspiration of our activity. This unifying reality religion knows as God.

*

THE PREPARATION OF THE MIND

Dean Inge said of Baron von Hügel that he was "our greatest theologian and the ablest apologist for Christianity in our time. What a splendid defence of the Christian faith may be gathered from his writings!" We very fitly conclude this brief survey of intellectual difficulties with a passage from the pen of this great Christian thinker in which he summarizes the "facts and truths concerning God which are of especial importance in the life of prayer." It is taken from the second series of the Essays and Addresses on the Philosophy of Religion.

I find it impossible to restrict myself here to explicit tests of Scripture or to the Dogmatic Definitions of the Christian Faith. On the other hand, I will only put forward certain positions which have behind them large affirmations or assured implications of Scripture and great Fathers and theologians of the Church—positions which, if, in recent centuries or in our own times, largely ignored or explained away, nevertheless express the never extinct Christian and Catholic experience. Working within these lines and drawing also upon my own fifty years of endeavour in these matters, I find the positions concerning God, which require full and intelligent adoption in our life of Prayer, to be seven.

I

God is a stupendously rich Reality—the alone boundlessly rich Reality. His outward action throughout the Universe—His creation, sustentation and direction of the

world at large—is immensely rich. Still deeper and more delicate is this richness and reality in God's Incarnation and Redemptive Action. Yet His Being, His Interior Life, are in no wise exhausted by all this outward Action, nor does this action occasion or articulate His character. We indeed, we little mortals—they too, the greatest of angels—we become our true selves, we articulate our spiritual characters, by apprehending, willing and serving God. But God is God, already apart from His occupation with us. These are the great facts which I believe to be specially revealed to us in the dogma of the Holy Trinity—facts of which we have an especial need in these our times. The whole of the Negative Theology, where it is sound and not really agnostic or pantheistic, is but an attempt to utter vividly this stupendous richness of God.

Our prayer will lack the deepest awe and widest expansion, if we do not find room within it for this fact concerning God. We will thus retain a strong sense that not even Jesus Christ and His Redemption exhaust God. Christian prayer, indeed Christian theology, are thus not Soteriology, practical or theoretical. Here Fénelon's great letters to the Carmelite nun, Sœur Charlotte de St. Cyprien, are admirable in their tender devotion to Christ free from all excessive Christocentrism.

2

God is the author of, and God is variously reflected in, all (innocent) Nature as well as in all Supernature. Here is the doctrine which was central in the outlook of Aquinas and Dante, of St. Francis and of Giotto. It was very largely forgotten or denied afterwards, during the later Middle Ages. And, although the Renaissance and then the Protestant Reformation were (variously wise and wild) protests against the abuses of the later Middle Ages, these movements were themselves largely infected by the

impoverished philosophy and the thin theology of these same later Middle Ages. The signs are multiplying that man will return, with such improvements as may be wisely desirable, to that wonderfully rich outlook of the Golden Middle Age, where God's outward action moves on two levels—the natural level and the supernatural level—a Good and a Better or Best—two *kinds*, and not merely two degrees, of Goodness. *We thus recognize in man's actual life a polarity, a tension, a friction, a one thing at work in distinctly another thing*—like yeast in meal, like salt in meat, like coral insects and whole coral reefs in the huge ocean—an ocean so different from themselves. We thus also acquire an explanation, and one which is not discouraging, of the fact that it is a difficult art to prevent religion from overstraining us and from thus leading to a very dangerous reaction against itself. For thus we see that the Beatitude of Heaven—the Direct Vision of God, that the sincere forgiveness of our enemies, the love of them, and that the eager acceptance of suffering, are graces and dispositions beyond, and different from, God apprehended as the dim background or groundwork of our lives, and from the honesties and decencies of average domestic and political life. Such honesties and decencies are also good, and they are necessary for us all, in various degrees and forms; and this, also, as the occasions and material for the supernatural to utilize and transform—the Mountain and the Plain, the Edelweiss, and Alpenrose, and the cornfields and potatoes; here all appear, and this in fruitful contrast and congenital inter-aid.

Such an inclusive and yet discriminating position brings also much help to our prayer. For in prayer, also, it brings a tension, to the verge of strain; and a *détente*, to the verge of relaxation. In both these movements of the soul God can, and God should, be envisaged—in the *détente*, the God of nature, the source of all that is wholesome and homely; and in the tension, the God of super-

nature, the source of all that is ardent and heroic. We thus escape dullness, monotony and the like—these subtle dangers of the spiritual life.

3

God alone is fully free. Here is another ancient doctrine which calls aloud for resuscitation. It is already clearly formulated by St. Augustine, and Aquinas elaborates it in its fullness. But the later Middle Ages largely lost it, and Protestants to this hour have, in this point, merely extended and hardened the later medieval obtuseness. Indeed, even the present Broad High Churchmen of the type of *Foundations* have, for the most part, elaborated an apologetic with regard to the dread fact of Evil which deliberately eliminates the great doctrine here envisaged. St. Augustine tells us: "*It is already a great freedom to be able not to sin. But the greatest freedom consists in the inability to sin.*" And Aquinas elaborates how Perfect Freedom consists in the spontaneous and joyous self-expression of a perfect nature. Thus God cannot will, God possesses no inclination to, Evil; and this absence of choice springs from precisely the perfection of His Freedom.

The persistent and vivid apprehension of this fact will greatly help our prayer. For thus only are we adequately humbled before God, since the difference between God and man is thus, essentially, not a difference, however great, in performance but in *nature*. Far beyond the range of our actual sinfulness extends the range of our potential sinfulness—of the imperfection inherent in our human degree and kind of Freedom. Whereas God is not only not actually sinful at all—He is incapable of sin, incapable of temptation to sin.

But there exists, not only God Pure, but also God Incarnate, Jesus Christ. Here, again, there is no actual

sinfulness, and here also the sinlessness is a most wholesome occasion of humility to ourselves, the manifoldly sinful. In Jesus Christ the closeness of the union of His human nature with the Divine nature—with a Divine Person—renders actual sin impossible even in that Human nature. Nevertheless this human nature in itself is, even here, not above real temptation. "He was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin," says the Epistle to the Hebrews (iv. 15). Here, again, it is important for us to understand that even such temptation—temptation without sin—is an imperfection pertaining to a certain kind of freedom—to the human kind of freedom—and not a necessary condition of all freedom, of freedom as such. For thus in Prayer we can, we will, look up to, adore God, the perfect Freedom, which contrasts so grandly with our own poor little freedom—even with our freedom where this exists in us, and is used by us, at its very best.

4

God is the Supreme Good—of the stone and of the plant, of the animal, of man, of the angel, but in what wondrously various degrees both of self-communication on the part of God, and of consciousness on the part of the creature, as to this gift from God, and still more as to the Giver, God Himself! In proportion to the depth and the breadth of any and every creature's nature, the creature possesses, or can attain to, the consciousness that God is its sole ultimate rest, sole pure delight. Religion, as distinct from ethics, flies straight at once to this great ultimate fact, to this unique personalist reality, to God as Beatitude and Beatifier. Thus the religious soul, in proportion to the strength of its religion, always reaches beyond all abstract law, all mere sense of duty and of obligation. St. Augustine is the great doctor of this our divine rest and our divine delight.

Our prayer will be immensely enriched and expanded by a persistent cultivation of this sense of God as our true home. For thus the rivalry between God and creatures for the possession of our hearts will become less and less a struggle between a mysterious obligation and a clear fascination, and more and more a competition between an ocean-wide, all-penetrating joy, when our souls come to their true, deep selves, and pleasures feverish, fleeting and shallow, when we allow ourselves heedlessly to be carried along by our superficial selves.

5

God, we have thus already found, is, indeed, not all unlike man. For how, if God were all unlike him, could man apprehend God, and love God, and try "to be perfect even as our heavenly Father is perfect"? Yet God is also *other than man*. Other, because He, God, is a Reality, an Identity, a Consciousness, distinct from the reality, identity, consciousness of any of His creatures or of the sum-total of them. And God is other, because this His distinct Reality is, by its nature, so much higher and richer, not only in degree but in kind, than is the nature of man or of any other creature. "Man is made in the image and likeness of God." Yes, but we must not press this as an exhaustive norm, as though God were simply man writ large—man's better and best instincts and conditions on an immense scale. We shall doubtless be much nearer the facts if we think of God as the living Source and the always previous, always prevenient Realization, in degrees and ways for us ineffable, of our ideals and ever imperfect achievements—a Realization which must not be taken directly to contain concretely what our conditions and strivings contain ideally. I am deeply convinced that the truth, and hence the fascination of Religion, as really requires some such emphasis on the *unlikeness* of God as

it requires emphasis upon the likeness. So, for instance, "God is Love" is a central truth proclaimed by the New Testament and by all the saints of God. And so again, "God careth for us"—that God is full of sympathy for all His creatures, and for man especially, Jesus Himself never ceases to proclaim and to illustrate. Yet we must beware not to press this further, so as to mean suffering in God. For suffering is an evil, and there exists no evil in God: the religious instinct spontaneously and unchangeably hungers after God as Pure Joy. With St. Bernard, in his classic lament on the death of his darling twin-brother Gerard, we will hold that there exists the deepest *compassio*, but no *passio* in God.

Yet our hearts long also (though less strongly, I believe) for downright fellow-suffering, when they suffer and when they are exhorted to suffer well. Such fellow-suffering (deeper than ever we ourselves could suffer, and in One who shares with us the evil of suffering, but without any admixture of the far greater evil of sin) is supplied by the Humanity of Our Lord. The Humanity of Jesus Christ, we have already found, brings temptation as near to God as is compatible with Godhead. And now we find this same Humanity of Jesus brings suffering as near to God as is compatible with the same Godhead. Indeed, the sufferings are so great as to require, for their sustainment by His human nature, the presence and action of the Divine nature, of the Divine Person which has conjoined itself to, and which informs, this human nature.

Our prayer will profit greatly if we thus hold firmly and fervently this double truth: of the *Pure Joy of God* and of the *Deep Suffering of Jesus*. For we will thus neither diminish God to a man of but larger size than we little men are, nor will we dehumanize Jesus by ignoring the immense sufferings, as well as the storm and stress—the temptations—of His earthly life. The definition of the Council of Chalcedon, difficult as it may be to apply it

in any great detail, will thus continue to enshrine for us, also as praying souls, an imperishable truth: Jesus Christ is both truly God and truly Man.

6

All we have so far said implies or leads up to the great fact and truth: that *we men need God much more than, and very differently from, the way and degree in which God needs us men.* God is the absolute Cause, the Ultimate Reason, the Sole True End and Determiner of our existence, of our persistence, of our nature, of our essential calls and requirements. God is all these things for man. Man is not one of these things for God. Man comes to his true self by loving God. God is the very ocean of Himself—of Love—apart from all creation. Thus the positions between God and Man, and between Man and God, are entirely uninterchangeable. Hence the most fundamental need, duty, honour and happiness of man is not petition, nor even contrition, nor again even thanksgiving; these three kinds of prayer which, indeed, must never disappear out of our spiritual lives; but *adoration*. Probably the greatest doctor and the greatest practiser among souls well known to us in these respects, of such overwhelmingly adoring prayer, is St. Augustine. Never, in spite of his tenderly anthropomorphic devotion, does the great African forget this profound non-equality, this non-interchangeable relation between God and man. Our prayer will greatly deepen and widen out, if we also develop such a sense—a sense which is now continually exposed to the subtle testing and sapping of the pure immanentisms and the sentimental anthropocentrisms which fill the air.

7

The Prevenience of God thus appears as the root-fact and the root-truth of all our previous positions. God not only loves us more and better than we can ever love ourselves, "*carior est illis*"—to the Gods—" *homo quam sibi*," already Juvenal told us; but God loved us before we loved, or could love, Him. God's love of us rendered possible and actual our love of God. This is emphatically proclaimed by the First Epistle of St. John, and is a favourite doctrine of St. Bernard. Thus the great Cistercian Abbot bids his monks rise never so early for their night choir prayer in coldest mid-winter; they will find God awake, Him the awakener; they will find Him waiting for them, always anticipating even their earliest watches. How scandalously much is this great fact forgotten in our days, even by otherwise alert preachers to educated congregations! I had much talk with an Australian Non-conformist minister upon this point, some ten years ago; and he determined to preach it before such a congregation—a large one in London. He afterwards reported to me that his discourse had made a great stir, crowds of his hearers flocking into the vestry to declare to him that they never in their lives had heard such doctrine, and how wonderful and awakening it was!

Our prayer will certainly gain in depth and aliveness, if we thus continually think of God as the true inspirer of our most original-seeming thoughts and wishes, whensoever these are good and fruitful—as Him who secretly initiates what He openly crowns.

I take these to be the seven great facts and doctrines concerning God—His richness, His double action, natural and supernatural, His perfect Freedom, His delightfulness, His otherness, His adorableness and His prevenience. These

seven facts, vividly apprehended, will, even singly and how much more if seen conjointly, each penetrating and calling forth the others, bring much depth and breadth, much variety and elasticity into our prayer. This, however, only if we understand plainly that there is no occasion whatsoever for us to constrain ourselves *positively* on these points. I mean that, though a Christian's prayer will suffer in its Christianity, if it consciously and systematically excludes, still more if it denies, any of these facts, yet no one soul, at any one period of its spiritual life, will feel equally attracted to them all. It will be quite enough—indeed it will be the only wise course—if each particular soul, at any one period of its growth, attends positively, affirmatively, and lovingly to two or three, or even to but one of these facts. Thus not any one soul, but the society of souls, the Church of Christ, will simultaneously apprehend and apply all these facts and truths. The Church's several constituents and organs will supplement each other, and will, collectively, furnish a full perception and a full practice of these great facts of God.

CHAPTER EIGHT

MORAL DIFFICULTIES

WHEN Jesus was asked about the commandments He linked together love toward God with love to our neighbour. The two are inseparable in Christian thought, and more than once Jesus startled His contemporaries by the uncompromising realism with which He related them. "If, therefore, thou art offering thy gift at the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hast ought against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, first, and be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." And again, at the conclusion of what is for many of us His most searching and challenging parable, He says, "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Heavenly Father forgive you your trespasses." We are not to think of God's refusal to forgive us as an arbitrary act, as though God were unforgiving. It springs from the very nature of forgiveness, which involves the continuance of the fellowship as though no wrong-doing had interrupted it. But if we maintain a harsh and loveless attitude toward our brother, we are driving the Spirit of God out of our hearts. It is we who exile ourselves from the love of God.

The importance of this truth for the reality of our communion with God can hardly be over-emphasized; and there can be little doubt that much difficulty and unreality in prayer has its source in personal conflicts. The remedy for this lies with God, who, if we ask sincerely, can give us the grace to be reconciled. But such reconciliation must not be a matter of feeling, but of fact. As far as we can achieve it we must right whatever is unbrotherly in our relationship with others. It is with this moral difficulty that this chapter is concerned.

ARE WE SEEKING GOD AS AN ESCAPE
FROM MEN?

Leslie D. Weatherhead has become justly celebrated for the skill with which he can help people in the matter of self-examination, and can show the remedy for spiritual disharmony. In this passage from his book How Can I Find God? he seeks to help us face honestly and courageously the things in our human relationships that may be hindering our religious life.

The New Testament makes it very clear that a search for God on the part of an individual who will not put his relationships with men right is a hopeless proceeding. For this reason alone, many, in their search for God, fail. One friend of mine for two years sought for the kind of experience of God which the New Testament offers in such glowing colours and about which he had heard others speak. Then it came home to him that he wanted a private experience of God which would bring him comfort, peace and strength, but he was unwilling to put away a grievance and resentment which he bore another. He sought out that other, talked things over, asked forgiveness for the malice in his heart, and since then he has become one of the most radiant Christian men I know.

“If therefore thou art offering thy gift at the altar and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar; first be reconciled to thy brother and then come and offer thy gift.”

We have seen already the need for repentance. For, indeed, we need forgiveness. But it is well to point out that the condition Jesus mentions which is essential to forgiveness is not repentance, but our forgiveness of others. “It is often said that our Lord’s doctrine is that of free forgiveness on the sole condition of repentance; but if by forgiveness is meant the readiness and desire to restore

the old relations of love and intimacy, then there are no conditions at all. God always and unceasingly desires to maintain those relations and to restore these as soon as ever we break them. But there is a condition that we must fulfil if we are to make our own the forgiveness He always and freely offers. And it is noticeable that repentance is not, in fact, mentioned in this action. The one thing that is mentioned, and that with a most solemn reiteration, is our forgiveness of those who have injured us or are in our debt. The prayer for forgiveness is the only petition in the Lord's Prayer to which any condition is attached; and it is this condition. The lesson is driven home by the parable of the Unforgiving Servant" (Matt. xviii. 23-35).¹ There is no such thing as a private reconciliation with God as long as relationships with men are not as right as we can make them. A religion which neglects this tremendous truth is that most subtle and deadly thing, a perversion of religion, a self-deception, a comfortable way of escaping reality.

God, we have made clear, is seeking us, but we cannot be found and restored to that relationship with His other children if there is a single one of them whom we refuse to forgive. A boy who will not be friends with his brothers cannot privately be received by his father. A boy who sought his father with the reservation that he mustn't be asked to be friendly with all his brothers would show how woefully wrong was his conception of family life. Yet that is what men and women within the Church are constantly doing. We see them standing up and singing hymns, even kneeling at the Communion Table, and yet we know they regard one person as a "rank outsider" and another as "hopelessly impossible"; that they say of one, "I've washed my hands of him," and of another, "I've no use for him," and of a third (condescendingly), "I forgive him, but I hope I shan't meet him again." No such soul

¹ Archbishop Temple, *Christ's Revelation of God*, p. 37 (S.C.M.).

will ever find God in the New Testament sense until that proud conceit is broken down. The God such folk think they have found is a caricature such as Mr. Bernard Shaw delights to portray.¹ Such a God is not the Father of Jesus.

No real contact could be maintained with Jesus by a soul which harboured resentment or left wrong without whatever restitution was possible being made. We note this in the case of Zaccheus. Christ did not tell Zaccheus to make restitution. Zaccheus knew that his relationship with Jesus could not be right, knew that a rich experience was being held back, until wrong things were put right. "If I have wronged any man I will restore him fourfold."

Often it is not so easy for us as for Zaccheus. To pay back money is not difficult if we possess it. Often it is not easy to see what needs to be done to put our relationship right. A confession of sin to the wronged person is not always the right thing to do. It may give the sinner relief by placing the burden he carries in his conscience as an added burden on the shoulders of the one already wronged. This was so, for example, in the case of a man who drugged and then sexually assaulted his victim.

But for most of us it is not so hard to see what we *ought* to do. What is hard is the blow to our pride involved in doing what we see to be right.

Not every attempt to put right a relationship with men is met with tears of joy and the outstretched hand. Sometimes such an attempt is met with silence or contempt or with the shrugged shoulder or with that secret malice which rejoices that the enemy has "climbed down." In spite of this let us get our relationships as right as we can, for only so can we find God. If we have robbed another of his good name let us tell him so, ask his forgiveness and try to repair the damage we have done. If we have harboured jealous thoughts, or bitter, unkind criticisms of another, let us tell him so and be more loving, tolerant

¹ Cf. *The Black Girl in her Search for God*.

and charitable. If we have parted from another in anger let us seek him out or write him at once and seek to put matters right. If we are seeking God, let us first spend some time in thinking out our relationships with men, making arrangements for certain interviews, posting half a dozen letters. And if the person wronged be dead or removed beyond our ken, or if confession would make the situation more intolerable than ever for the wronged person, let us solemnly acknowledge that wrong before God and dedicate ourselves to a more devoted service of sympathy to the kind of victim we have wronged, and of preventive and alert service to the kind of sinner we have been, acknowledging to the latter, if need be, our own fall, that he may be saved from becoming what we already have become.

Dr. Frank Buchman tells us that his conversion involved the writing of six letters to men whom he felt he had wronged. He did not get six replies, but he did get a tremendous sense of personal release. He found God in a way he had never found Him before. And the story of the Oxford Group Movement abounds in illustrations of our theme. Here is a man at the head of a printing plant in the East. He seeks a full experience of God. One morning he says something like this, "You men have worked because you feared me. That is all wrong. From now on Christ is the head of this business." Having apologized to an Indian with whom he had lost his temper, he put all the three hundred employees on a living wage, and because relationships were right he himself entered into a transforming experience of the power and love of God. A doctor I know put right a relationship with the examiners who formed the authority which gave him his degree, though he risked losing it altogether. One man offered a former employer £250 as payment for a thousand hours stolen from him when he should have been working. Mr. A. J. Russell's book, *For Sinners Only*, is crammed

with stories of men and women who have found God, and their cases strongly support our theme.

It is no good saying, "Well, I admit that my relationship *with Christ* is wrong, but I shall get over it. Time will heal the trouble." What a dreary lie it is that time heals everything! Does time heal a suppurating appendix or a repressed complex or a sense of guilt? All three require surgical help. The first applied to the body, the second to the mind, the third to the soul. And the third kind of surgery is the painful setting right as far as possible of our relationships with men. Neglect that surgery and the body may die, the mind be disabled, the spirit crippled by a depression from which a man cannot be aroused by any other treatment. This is not a warning carelessly written down. Indeed what warning could be more stern than this? "When ye pray say, ' . . . Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us.' *For if ye forgive not men their trespasses neither will your Heavenly Father forgive you your trespasses.*"¹

But I want to pass to another sense in which we miss God because we want Him for ourselves and would exclude our relations with others from our quest. It must be realized that we cannot live by ourselves in the little house of life, and shut and bar the doors, and put "No hawkers, no circulars" on the gate, and proceed to find God. Do we really love our brother? Or do we shrink from contact with him? True, he is not always lovable. He is vain, selfish, cruel, unsympathetic, critical and so on. Even so we cannot be religious and selfish. The two words imply opposites. The life that shuts itself off from its fellows will not find God.

We recall the phrase in the Benedictus.

"That we should be saved from our enemies
And from the hand of all that hate us."

¹ Matt. vi. 15.

But is it a good thing that we should be delivered from the hands of all that hate us? Might it not be a very good thing for us to hear what they have to say? Might not they be the servants of God doing His work? With Browning we may ask, "Hush, I pray you. What if that friend—or even apparent enemy—happens to be God?"

We know how some foolish mothers receive their child after he has had his face smacked, say, by another boy: "There! there! did that horrid boy tease you and hit you, then?" Mark Sabre in *If Winter Comes* is always flying out of the room saying that his wife doesn't understand him. Do we not seek God in much the same way, wearing the mood of injured innocence, fleeing from men who misunderstand us, revile us, yes, and hate us, and expect God to pat us on the head, and say, "There! there! they are nasty horrid people to misunderstand you." Probably the nasty horrid people are also going to God complaining about you. That is to say, we seek in God a refuge and an escape from men who, if we listened to them and heeded their criticisms, might add steel and grit to our character. Isn't that what Jesus means by loving your enemies; not fleeing from them, but listening to them patiently without losing your temper, hearing them out, doing the fair thing by them? And do we, by our attempt to escape, deprive God of His intention to find us more fully through them? It is because this has been so, that religion has earned its name of being soft; of being what some psychologists call an infantile attitude to life, for we try to make it an escape from life. Browning has a word for us here:

"Then, welcome each rebuff

That turns earth's smoothness rough,

Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go!

Be our joys three-parts pain!

Strive, and hold cheap the strain;

Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge the
throe.

He fixed thee mid this dance
Of plastic circumstance,

This Present, *thou, forsooth, wouldst fain arrest:*
Machinery just meant

To give thy soul its bent,

Try thee, and turn thee forth, sufficiently impressed."

Let me tell you a true story which moved me very much. A friend of mine is a minister working among miners. During a strike he tried a most interesting and successful experiment. He organized on his church premises a toy factory. The miners made toys and sold them, and in this way, in many miners' homes, they kept the wolf from the door. My friend told me how the men revelled in it. It gave them food for their minds, and brought food to their bodies at a time when, in some other places, miners were standing at street corners or sitting in public houses. My friend himself worked with them. He had the exquisite joy which I, at any rate, have never had, of having made something with his hands. He says the men worked early and late, putting in far more hours than any mine owners ever asked for. At the same time—though my friend never said so—I imagine the miners sometimes got on his nerves. On one occasion he went for a long walk in order to be alone. He wanted to be alone, and pray, and be quiet. He simply could not get away from the sound of footsteps. If he stopped on the road he heard footsteps coming. He dawdled till they overtook him and then waited, but there always were some others. He left the road and went into a wood. He really thought he was getting alone and quiet. He began to pray. Then tramp, tramp, tramp. . . . He could still hear men walking on the road below him. At one point he took to his heels and ran, and stopped, panting, waiting . . . his breath came in sobs. . . . Then on a road he never knew existed he heard the same noise of footsteps, tramp, tramp,

tramp. . . . He felt like a man pursued, frantic, desperate. . . . He did so want to get away from men, he did so want the refuge of God. . . . Yet always the sound of following feet . . . tramp, tramp, tramp. Then a voice came to him from God which might have expressed its message in the words of Francis Thompson:

“Still with unhurrying chase,
And unperturbed pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
Came on the following Feet,
And a Voice above their beat,
Naught shelters thee, who wilt not shelter Me.”

The feet were the feet of God. The feet all around him were telling him that the life that excludes men cannot find God.

Do not misunderstand. There are times when we must shut men out physically. Every Christian must be a believer in the shut door, the secret place. We must make times when we push away the tumultuous demands of things and men and get alone with God. But though we must shut them out of our rooms we mustn't shut them out of our prayers or out of our hearts. We must shut people out physically as Jesus did; but we must not shut them out spiritually. Jesus never did. Jesus says “Go into the inner room and shut the door and pray in secret.” But He says, “pray for those who despitefully use you.” Shut them out of your room, but not out of your heart.

I think the great part of the truth of this part of my message can be expressed in a parable of a little boy whose father was the medical officer in charge of a big institution for the blind. One evening when it was getting dark one of the blind patients came to the door of the medical officer's house. As it happened the little boy was just going upstairs to bed. He had one glimpse of the sightless eyes of the man at the door and then he rushed off screaming

and terrified. His father picked the laddie up and hushed his baby terror, taking him right away to his own study in another part of the building; and then when terror and fear had been banished, the father took his laddie with him and they went and spoke to the blind man. The father explained that all his own life's interest lay in helping those people. The boy grew up to love them and ultimately to serve them. Notice! If the father had only taken the boy away to his study to comfort him, the experience would have been robbed of more than half its potential value. The boy would have had a repressed fear of blindness which might have wrought in him positive harm. One might be certain he would not have grown up to love the blind, as he did first for his father's sake and then for their sake as well.

It is not different for us. Surely we may turn to God as a refuge, a hiding-place, a covert, but then we must turn back to men, loving them in spite of their criticisms, their meannesses, their disloyalties, and our experience of men will bring us nearer to the real God and we shall learn how best He may be served. There is a time when the fretted soul may be in his lover's arms. But, except in novels, *men* do not stay long in their lover's arms. They go back to duty. And because they have been in their lover's arms, if the lover is worth the name, they are stronger, braver, better *men*.

It seems to me that Charles Wesley is teaching us this lesson in one of his most popular hymns.

“Jesu, Lover of my soul.
Let me to Thy bosom fly.

Other refuge have I none,
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee,
Leave, ah leave me not alone,
Still support and comfort me.

All my trust on Thee is stayed,
All my help from Thee I bring,
Cover my defenceless head
With the shadow of Thy wing."

How the mind rests in that sure and great refuge! But listen. A man does not stay long in the Lover's arms. The soul is beginning to be satisfied.

Thou, O Christ, art all I want.—This is a much stronger note than

"Hide me, O my Saviour, hide."

This is the beginning of satisfaction. Then what happens? The mind begins to go out to others.

"Raise the fallen, cheer the faint,
Heal the sick, and *lead the blind.*"

And there is the implication that that must be done through man's co-operation.

The wonderful story of the Transfiguration reveals this principle in the Master's life. The Master has sought refuge, escape, sanctuary. He wanted, I think, escape from men as well as from things. On the lonely mountain peak, alone with the three who understood, He is finding peace, poise, quietness, harmony. We cannot follow Him very far into this experience. The Son is back in the bosom of the Father. This kind of communion is higher than we have ever known. The fashion of His countenance is altered. His very raiment is white and glistening. All this is beyond us as it was beyond those who were with Him. We kneel with them in utter awe. We feel with them as men who have no right to be there, however good it is to be allowed to share the experience. Peter is quite out of his depth. He is the practical man and the impulsive man. He doesn't quite like it. It seems uncanny. It is an experience too vast, too deep, too high for him. He wants to

make something; to do something with his hands. He submits a proposal. "Let us make three shelters—one for thee, and one for Moses and one for Elijah," and Mark, his biographer, probably at Peter's own instance, adds in the record, "For he wist not what to say, for they were sore afraid." A cloud, shot through and through with the sunlight, kisses the mountain peak, and it seems a symbol to Peter of the presence of the very God. God is talking to His own Son. Yes, and God, through that very experience, is talking to them, saying, "This is my beloved Son, hear ye him!" Far below seethes the multitude. But here all is quiet. Then do you see what follows? "And when they were come to the multitude there came a man kneeling to Him and saying, 'Lord have mercy on my son for he is an epileptic.' . . ." And Jesus healed the boy. He was cured from that hour. Back from refuge to reality. Not escaping from life, but finding, in the place of refuge, power for life and meaning in life.

We must do that. We must not go to church Sunday after Sunday and just feel how beautiful it all is. We must not get half-hypnotized by the lights and music and devotional atmosphere. We shall not find God in any enduring way unless we link Sunday night with Monday morning; and unless Monday morning is different because of Sunday night we may ask whether we really get to God on Sunday night or only deceive ourselves. Because of this many ardent churchgoers have never found God at all. We shall not get further with our problem than Jesus did in Gethsemane. Into those woods He went for refuge, for escape, for sanctuary—refuge from men as well as from things. He gets away, there, even from His dearest. He went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and there prayed. He wanted the Father's arms about Him, those everlasting arms. But a man never stays long in the arms of his Lover . . . "Arise, let us be going; he that betrayeth me is at hand." Into the woods He went,

anguished, doubting, troubled. Out of the woods He came, from refuge to reality, calm, confident, unafraid. "This is the way the Master went. Should not the servant tread it still?" You are seeking God, you say? What is your relation to men?

*

DO WE HARBOUR PREJUDICES?

One valuable outcome of the Group Movements is that they have made many Christians conscious of a lack of charity that may be hindering their communion with God. Dr. Macmillan, who is the Head of Department of the Philosophy of Religion at the University of Pretoria, acknowledges a debt to the Oxford Group in this connection, and he here carries the need for goodwill and love to the furthestmost limits for a South African—the colour prejudice. This is taken from his book of sermons Seeking and Finding.

"Ye shall not see my face except your brother be with you." It is the brother we would rather leave behind when we come into God's Presence, the brother we are rather ashamed of; or, it may be, the brother of whom we are afraid, as Jacob was of Esau, because of the wrong he had done him; the brother who is a cause of annoyance or uneasiness to us, for reasons best known to ourselves; the brother whom we secretly dislike, though we have never had the courage to tell him so; the brother we do not want to see much of at any time, least of all when we are engaged in worshipping God, lest, knowing us as he does, he may laugh at us and wonder what we are up to. For it must seem strange to the brother we leave behind that we can worship God with so clear a conscience. Many do act as if they could go on with their worship and be religious without reference to their ordinary relationships. They seem to imagine that religion is altogether a question of a

Divine relationship, that so long as they have a purely spiritual relationship with God, they need not worry much as to whether or not they are in right relationship with their fellow-men. But there is no such thing as a purely spiritual relationship. We cannot detach ourselves from the world in which we live and from the relationships we have one towards another. These have everything to do with our relation to God—in fact, their importance is primary, not secondary. They are the determining things in our relation to God. “For if a man love not the brother whom he sees, how can he love God whom he does not see?” There is no practical way of showing our love to God except through our love to our brother. If we have a wrong relationship with him, we are out of relationship with God. Not a doubt about that.

Why, then, do we labour the point? Just because it is so often missed; just because many refuse to believe that a wrong human relationship is so disqualifying. They say, “Surely when we come to church, or read our Bibles, or go down on our knees, we can get into communion with God, quite apart from our family relationships or the transactions and associations of our ordinary work-a-day life.” It is not possible; for it is precisely at those points that God wants to have dealings with you and me, in the practical affairs, situations and relationships of everyday life; in the talk you have with the man with whom you walk or drive to business in the morning; in the relation you have towards your clerks or your clients, your employer or your servants, white or coloured, or it may be the members of your own family circle. These are the really determining things in your relation to God, not the coming to church, or the prayers, or the Bible-reading. These are fine things in themselves, indispensable things to the Christian life, but they may be the very devil if substituted for the primary duties of truth, mercy, courtesy, consideration and loving-kindness in our relations with those with whom we have

to do; not only those with whom we are committed by ties of blood and affection, but also those with whom we have business relations, those with whom we have human relations—the beggar who comes to our door, the coloured boy or girl, whether they are in our service or not. They are all included in this wonderful word “brother.” Indeed, the African natives use the word for any boy of their tribe or race; they speak of him as their “brother.” If we think we can leave one of the least of these little ones behind or out of account, we shall find it impossible to get anywhere along the road that leads to God. We may get along other roads—the road of success, of self-interest, of self-improvement—all the better, perhaps, for having no sense of responsibility towards others, but not along the road of real and lasting blessedness, the blessedness of knowing God and seeing His face. It will be with us as it was with the poor millionaire, and he *was* poor, who, when he was a child, used to pray for a white pony. “O Lord, send me a white pony.” He continued that prayer all his life till he was an old man, though he had enough money to buy thousands of white ponies. It simply meant that he was vaguely conscious of some big unrealized wish, the biggest wish in his life. He had lived for himself, struck himself free from all human relationships, in so far as that is possible, and set himself the task of making money, of getting on, no matter who had to get off in the process. He succeeded only too well in what he set out to do, but it was not the biggest wish of his life, after all. The white pony stood for that, and it was not something that he could buy with money. It was like happiness, something that must come to him; that is why it was the prayer of his life, a prayer that could never be answered, not unless he was willing to let go all his possessions, and make amends for all the wrongs he had ever done to others.

There are those who wonder why their prayers are not answered. Believe me, there is a reason, quite a simple

and conclusive reason. Until we are ready to fulfil the conditions, the deepest wish of our hearts cannot be realized. Until we lose all selfish desire for success or security, apart from what happens to our brother, the happiness for which we yearn will not come to us. Until we are prepared to do justly and to love mercy, to take no mean advantage of our brother, to scoop no rich profit out of his misfortune, we need not try to walk humbly with our God. God can have nothing to say to us, nothing to do with us. If we have done anyone a wrong, if we have sold him into Egypt, sold him so completely that it may be impossible for us to redeem him again—he may be beyond our power—we must just do the best by the brother that remains. It was because of the wrong the brethren had done to Joseph that their little brother had to be left behind. It is a parable of how the disabling effects of our wrong-doing work out on others. Joseph knew that in leaving the little brother behind they were showing a consideration not only for Benjamin, but also for the old man, their father, that was quite unusual. Yet he must put them and their motives to the proof. He must see if these men are in any real way different from what they were. So he puts them to the test. He knew that the old man, their father, would never let Benjamin out of his sight, unless on condition that the brothers, one or all of them, went surety for his life. This is what actually happened. Judah, who was the best of them, went surety for his brother's life. And that is about the only atonement we may be able to make for the wrong done to a brother who is beyond our power to help, who may be dead and gone—just by giving our life in surety for the brother that remains. It is the only way of restitution that may be open to us at the time. If we do really try to make amends to the brother or the sister whom our selfishness has sold into slavery by showing love and consideration to the brother that remains, God will bless us.

Not a doubt about that. He will bless us just as He blessed Jacob when he was brought to the point of penitence for the wrong he had done to his brother, and was ready to make amends.

It is a great principle, which, if it were acted on in domestic and social life, would bring heaven on earth. For it applies all round. It cuts right at the root of our race and colour prejudices, which assume preferential privilege for one race over another, even in its right to the blessings of the Gospel. Some years ago I heard C. F. Andrews, friend of Gandhi, telling a company of ministers that, though he was a priest of the Anglican Church, he could no longer worship with any freedom or joy in the Church of his baptism, could have no real communion there, unless he could bring with him his brown Indian brother to the altar. There were those who heard him who could not understand why he took the matter so deeply to heart. It surely could not be so serious a matter as all that. But it is. I am quite sure that C. F. Andrews is right.

“Ye shall not see my face except your brother be with you.” If there is any inhibitory motive in our worship with regard to our brother, no matter of what colour or creed he may be; if we are ashamed or unwilling to worship with him, or if we despise him, no matter how justified we may feel ourselves to be; or, if we feel that we have been wronged by him and owe him a grudge; or, if we are made to feel that he has aught against us, it is no use going on with the service or act of worship—we must go first and be reconciled to our brother, and then come and offer our gift. If we cannot find it in our hearts to forgive our brother or to ask for his forgiveness, how can we expect God to forgive us or to accept us or our gift? We must put things right with our brother first; or, at all events, we must be ready to put them right the moment an opportunity occurs, if we would behold the glory of our Father’s

face. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," said Jesus. And again, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

That is to say, we must first see each man or woman to be a brother or sister of ours before we can do unto Christ what we do unto them. It is not simply a question of doing a kind turn or a good deed to one in need; it is a question of doing something Christ-like and redemptive. It is when we go all out in real love to those in need and see Christ in the least likely and least likeable, when we are not ashamed to call even the outcast our brother, our sister, and in Christ's name claim for them a place at His feet, bringing them with us to the church we worship in, or to the altar we kneel at, or to the home we live in, that we see the face of God and realize why it is so often hid from our sight.

*

DANGEROUS PRAYERS OF DEFEAT AND OBSESSION

Prayer, like every other living force, may be a dangerous thing. The psychologists have stressed anew what Christ taught, that it may be a flight from reality, a self-regarding emotional luxury, instead of the means whereby we receive God into life. Professor Fearon Halliday deals with the danger of "obsessional prayers" and "prayers of defeat" in this passage, and shows the remedy to lie in a true conception of God, and uncompromising honesty with ourselves. It is taken from Psychology and Religious Experience.

The first condition of prayer is the Presence of God, but only when that is understood as not necessarily involving the sense of His Presence. Nothing is more vital for life or for religion than that we should distinguish

between faith and feeling. If there is a God, then He must be present, and His Presence does not depend upon our realization of it. We may be very thankful when we have a joyous or awed sense of the Presence of God, but if we were to wait for that sense before we prayed, we should never pray in the times of our deepest need. So taking for granted that God is present, let us ask what this means. It means that we are in the presence of the Father of our spirits, the Giver of our life. We are in the presence of the God who has been historically revealed to us in Jesus Christ—"He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." And as we think of our Lord's life on earth, we come to know something of the nature of God's will for us, and to realize that it is the one thing that has a claim upon us.

So the second condition of prayer is the will of God, and, because His will must be according to His character, we know that truth must desire truth, righteousness righteousness, love love, and life life. Humanly speaking, Jesus Christ was what we know Him to be, because His will was identified with the will of the Father. But that will is not, as some people seem to think, and as their prayers imply, a special good for special people, but a common good for all men. It is contained in the phrase: "The Kingdom of God," and means that God's love is upon all, that His call is to all, and that His way is the open road seen in the light of life's common day. If we are unwilling to see this it is of little use to pray, for the coming of the Kingdom of God to our souls simply means that we settle this problem of our actual life in the presence of God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Prayer, therefore, is an act of the soul by which, at any given time, we identify ourselves with the will of God as we know it in response to the continual demands of life. There is nothing vague or indefinite about it, and its reality can be tested very simply. Let a man ask himself what is God's will for him at the moment. Is he taking up the duty that

lies to his hand because God calls him to it? Is he, as he thinks of his dear ones—wife, brother, sister, child, friend—bringing his soul to the resolve of utter self-giving: “God do so to me and more also if aught but death part thee and me”? As he turns to his work does he also turn to his God and say: “As unto Thee”? As he sees the mass of struggling, burdened men and women, does he by an act of the soul respond to the call of God: “Thou shalt be my witness”? If he does, he knows the secret of prayer. “He that is willing to do the will of God shall know.”

Inadequate as is the foregoing, it will at least provide us with a standard of judgment by which to understand the perplexities, and detect the false manifestations, of the prayer life. It is much too often taken for granted in religious works that prayer, because it is necessary, is necessarily good. Just as the things called sympathy and love may be purely selfish emotions, so may prayer, when one really examines it, have in it nothing more than self-reference.

There are few of us who would not be surprised if we realized how often prayer which seems to us to be deeply religious may be merely self-regarding. Our conception of prayer will be fundamentally different according as we regard it as an isolation of ourselves with God, or as never apart from unity with our fellows, and from God's will for us and for them in life. Even petition for spiritual graces, unless it be made in this spirit, may be nothing more than the most exalted pride and selfishness. It is one thing to pray for patience in order to have a self-forgetful attitude to those among whom our lot is cast: it is quite another to be patient in order that we may admire our patience. It is one thing to spend hours in intercession for people with a conscious or unconscious sense of our virtue in so doing, and quite another to pray

for our friends and others because our good is bound up inseparably with theirs, and we are derelict unless they are blessed. It is one thing to thank God for the gifts of life, feeling all the time subtly proud of our own good fortune, and another to have the real spirit of thanksgiving which has always in it the consciousness that God's gifts are equally for all His children, and that His goodness to us enables us to share with them. It is not when we are held by the vision of our own self-perfection, but when we are seeing the world as it may become when we and others labour in the presence of God for its transfiguration, that we are on the way to the realization of what true prayer is.

There are many forms of prayer which are not only ineffective, but positively harmful. Many cases of nervous breakdown are due to conflicts which are in some way connected with sex. In order to overcome the conflict, prolonged, earnest and agonizing prayer is offered that the whole impulse be taken out of the nature. Now there are three things to note about prayer of this kind. In the first place it calls in question the good purpose of God in the ways of His creation; in the second its answer would mean the loss of all affection, and of all real interest in life; in the third it often leads to agnosticism, because, being contrary to the will of God, it continually defeats itself, and seems to point to God's continual denial. It is thus that a false religious view, rooted in a false idea of the nature of God, may blind us to the meaning of true religion. Here again the important thing for us to ask is whether we are praying to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, or to a God who is a projection of our own wishes and fears. Many people would never pray the prayers they do if they thought beforehand what kind of a God their prayers involved. We have constantly to be on our guard against reading into God's attitude towards us what, if we thought for a moment, we should see to be

incompatible with His perfect goodness. Often it is fear which deters people from abandoning the wrong conceptions for right ones, and fear of this kind generally has its roots in circumstances of the early life which have made faith difficult or impossible.

We must be ready to acknowledge also the impulsion of fear, and an inadequate acceptance of sex, in obsessional forms of prayer. Obsessional prayer is nothing more than a mechanism for the warding off of fear, and as such it is but one of many other ritual mechanisms. One sees it at work in the case of those people who experience a sensation of relief when they have prayed, but whose relief springs from the fact that they have prayed, and not from their conception of the God to whom they have prayed. They are satisfied in so far as they have paid the homage of fear, but they have not known the communion of faith and love.

Obsessional prayer may be carried to any lengths. A convert to Christianity from another religion was a convinced Christian while it was daylight, but at night could not prevent himself from praying in terror to the open sky. In the morning he saw the foolishness of this proceeding, but his knowledge, far from freeing him from it, increased his sense of conflict. It was only when the causes of his obsession had been discovered and removed that he was set free from it. His state of mind illustrated a common phenomenon. He was suffering from a sense of psychological guilt (feeling-guilt which is not necessarily real guilt), which resulted in a propitiatory mechanism, and showed the unconscious workings of early taboo fear. We would suggest that a great deal of the praying of the world, from the Thibetan prayer wheel to the prayers of many words accepted as discipline in modern days, can, from a psychological point of view, be very closely connected, and the significance of the fact is not to be lightly passed over, for in subtle ways it has affected and affects many

Christians, and it involves an essentially non-Christian thought of God.

It is a wrong, a non-Christian conception of God, that lies at the root of most false prayer. There are people who have honestly sought to right a wrong, and have asked God's forgiveness for it, and yet who dishonour Him by continuing to ask for forgiveness instead of accepting it gladly. There are people who ask God for guidance, but who never believe they have it; people who ask for patience and courage, but are never conscious of possessing them. What lies at the root of the inefficacy of such prayers? It is simply that from a psychological point of view they have the very opposite effect from the one which they desire, and from a religious point of view they are not the prayers of faith. Our mistake is that we tend to pray negatively, or as though God were not willing to hear, and we had to change His will by servility and importunity. The man who says over and over again, "Oh, God, save me from drink,"¹ while the very word drink fills him with a fear that far outweighs any sense he may have of God's presence and power, is really saying that he does not believe he can be saved. Often this is because he does not want to give up his failing, though he does want to be free from the fear of judgment, and imagines that his much praying will excuse him from personal responsibility. The fact is that we have no right to pray to God at all unless we are willing to be reconciled to Him, not only in one point of action, but in the whole of our life. We have to ask our-

¹ Words often have feeling-associations which affect the unconscious mind as negative suggestions. Therefore it is better to avoid words that are associated with a sense of defeat and frustration and to pray positively, thanking God because He is even now giving us that special power which we need in order to do His will. But this must not be looked upon as mere auto-suggestion or as a psychological trick by which victory may conveniently be won. It is a matter of one's deepest conviction about the nature of God and of reality and it is only as it springs from such a conviction that prayer lays hold on the power that succours and sets free.

selves, when we pray for forgiveness, whether we really prefer to cling to our faults, and simply seek to be free from penalty, or whether, by an act of the soul, we turn honestly from what we are to God, through whose personal fellowship with us in Jesus Christ we may become what is well pleasing in His sight?

We must, however, guard against the pitfall of believing that what is well pleasing to God is necessarily the hardest thing for us. Those who think that God's will for them necessarily leads to the hard path, are in a pathological condition which projects severity into their view of God. It may be that they are still determined by the feeling-attitudes of their home. We saw in the last chapter how what is thought of as real conscience is often merely an irrational obedience in adult life to the opinions and demands of the father or mother. This psychological conscience may, if it is not understood and superseded by real conscience, determine the prayer life of an individual to the end of his days, and what he looks upon as an objective conception of God may be almost or wholly subjective. If our father was solitary and independent, the ethical may be more prominent than the personal and religious in our idea of God. If our father was hard or narrow, we are apt in feeling to pray to an unjust and limited God, though in theory we should say that we believed Him to be neither of these. If we have been negative to our earthly father, we may even find it impossible to think of God as personal, or as Father. Indeed this psychological conscience, when it is taken for real conscience, may be a dreadful taskmaster, leading us to seek to propitiate a God who can never be satisfied, and a minister must learn to detect this unconscious acceptance of a false standard in people whose prayers leave them without joy or strength.

The attitude, which is religiously true (and which has shown itself to be psychologically helpful), may be summed up in the words: "When ye pray believe that ye have

received, and ye shall receive," and, "According to your faith be it unto you," and especially, "He that cometh to God must believe that he is." If we know that God is more willing to give to us than we are to receive, both the form and the feeling of our prayer will be changed. Indeed God is always giving to us, and it is we who are not receiving. Therefore we must beware lest in our prayers we all unconsciously turn from and repudiate His gifts. *If fear is our problem we should not pray to be rid of it, but should thank God that He is giving us courage.* We should open our eyes and see the new world into which He is leading us, and accept it in faith. If God is perfect goodness and truth, it is obvious that He is ever willing to lead us into liberty, but we must be sure that we want the liberty for which we pray. Seeing the evil, and seeing the good, and not fearing to face any of the facts, let us make our choice, and accept the better thing from God. Men have been changed to their finger-tips because the redeeming God was a living reality to them. But these men have not simply found God on their knees. Life has been the medium of His dealing with them, and their response to what they have seen to be His will has been at the heart of all their praying. They have found the real Presence of God and have walked in it, and have learned the secret of the prayer that is without ceasing. Such prayer cannot be a discipline, for it has become the central activity of a life of personal fellowship. It is healthy and natural, at any time, in any place, in any posture, for in the spirit of it, all life is sacrament.

But the great truth of the sacramental character of all life does not mean that set times for prayer are not wise and helpful, and it must not be turned into an excuse for abandoning them. Every day's demand is different, and we need special times for reviewing our circumstances in the light of God's presence, and learning His will concerning them. It is true that these are only a preparation

for the real prayer life of constant communion with God, but people who do not seek for regular times of quiet and recollection are not likely to have this communion. Vagueness and laziness are two of the greatest enemies of real religion and of moral victory in life, whereas by definite acts of surrender we enlist our will in the service of God for the conflict in our soul and in the world.

Let us note this. The will is surrendered by an act, but the quality of feeling is changed by a process. It is possible in time by acts of will to mould our feeling, for contemplation and quiet meditation, which lead to the realization of the presence and love of God in Jesus Christ, and of what He has done for us, are powerful to change and to direct the emotions and desires of our hearts. It is possible to come to our private times of prayer not only without desire, but with feelings that antagonize, and yet through the command of the will that causes the soul to think on the things of God, and to open to them, to rise with chastened heart and earnest desire for what is good. The blessings that flow from such concentration of soul are among the best that life has to give, for when we meditate in faith, and in loving resolve, we are unfolding our natures and our personalities to the influence of God's love and power. It is here that our personalities are affected to their depths, and it is not our personalities alone that are affected. The love that is power, and the vision which this love has of what others may become, is found and perceived as we think of these others in the presence of God. So we come to understand the mystery and the power of personality, and to learn the way of that creative living through which God's purpose in the world is accomplished. The untold forces of our nature are touched, and we become vehicles of the divine desire and demand.

PART THREE
THE ART OF PRAYER

INTRODUCTION

ONE might hesitate to talk about the art of prayer lest it should give the impression that prayer is a rare accomplishment; whereas, regarded as communion with God, it is a thing as natural as a child conversing with its father. None the less, there are certain truths about a child's obligations to the family, and about its relationship with its father, that it needs to learn if it is to enter fully into the fellowship of a home. In that sense we may say that there is an art of home-making, although it is the most artless and natural of all activities. In a similar sense we may talk about prayer as an art. It is noteworthy in this connection that the only thing the disciples ever asked Jesus explicitly to teach them was how to pray. Jesus did not refuse the request. In this section, then, we will sit at the feet of those who can teach us how to pray, beginning with the greatest Master of all.

Prayer, although it is in one sense natural, is a serious matter, and when we are not prepared to devote to it something of the same interest and energy that we devote to our daily work or a game of golf, we can hardly wonder if its results are not striking in our lives. The consequences of its neglect are serious. Indeed there are many signs that the technique of strenuousness in the modern world is failing us, and that mental and nervous collapses are due to our lack of receptiveness to the Divine resources. The words of Professor Jung are now very familiar, but they are worth quoting in this connection: "During the last thirty years people from all the civilized countries of the earth have consulted me. I have treated many hundreds of patients, and among all my patients in the second half of life, that is to say over thirty-five, there has not been one whose problem in the last resort has not

been that of finding a religious outlook on life. It is safe to say that every one of them fell ill because he had lost that which the living religions of every age have given to their followers, and not one of them has really been healed who did not regain a religious outlook."

But if neglect is serious, misuse of prayer may no less be dangerous. Prayer would not be a living force if serious consequences did not ensue upon its misuse. Jesus bade men to pray believingly; but what if men fail to pray believingly? As we have already seen, modern psychologists no less than ancient mystics have something to tell us about the results that follow, and this alone is sufficient to emphasize the need we have to study prayer as well as to use it.

CHAPTER NINE

WHAT JESUS TAUGHT ABOUT PRAYER

HE SAID TO THEM "WHEN YE PRAY . . ."

WE will begin with a summary of the teaching of our Lord about prayer, taken from Dr. James Moffatt's *Everyman's Life of Jesus*. In reading it through note how Jesus begins with the fact of God's resources, and God's eagerness to give, and how He then passes to the only thing that can hinder the gift being made—our unreceptiveness.

He was praying at a certain place, and when he stopped one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples." He said to them, "When you pray say,

Our Father in heaven,
thy name be revered,
thy Reign begin,
thy will be done
on earth as in heaven.

Give us to-day our bread for the morrow,
and forgive us our sins,

for we do forgive everyone who had offended us;
and lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil."

He said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, let

me have three loaves; for a friend of mine travelling has come to my house, and I have nothing to set before him.' And suppose he answers from the inside, 'Don't bother me; the door is locked by this time, and my children are in bed with me. I can't get up and give you anything.' I tell you, though he will not get up and give you anything because you are a friend of his, he will at least rise and give you what you want, because you persist. So I tell you,

Ask and the gift will be yours,

seek and you will find,

knock and the door will open to you;

for everyone who asks receives,

the seeker finds,

the door is opened to anyone who knocks.

Why, which of you, when asked by his son for a loaf, will hand him a stone? Or, if asked for a fish, will you hand him a serpent? Well, if for all your evil you know to give your children what is good, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! "

He also told them a parable about the need of always praying and never losing heart. "In a certain town," he said, "there was a judge who had no reverence for God and no respect even for man. And in that town there was a widow who used to go and appeal to him for 'Justice against my opponent!' For a while he would not, but afterwards he said to himself, 'Though I have no reverence for God and no respect even for man, still, as this widow is bothering me, I will see justice done to her—not to have her for ever coming and pestering me.' Listen," said the Lord, "to what this unjust judge says. And will not God see justice done to his elect who cry to him by day and night? Will he be tolerant to their opponents? I tell you, he will quickly see justice done to his elect. And yet, when the Son of man does come, will he find faith on earth? "

"Have faith in God. I tell you truly, whoever says to this hill, 'Take and throw yourself into the sea,' and has not a doubt in his mind but believes that what he says will happen, he will have it done. So I tell you, whatever you pray for, believe that you have got it, and you shall have it."

"When you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites, for they like to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street-corners,

so as to be seen by men;

I tell you truly, they do get their reward.

When you pray, *go into your room and shut the door*, pray to your Father who is in secret,

and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Do not pray by idle rote like the pagans,

for they suppose they will be heard the more they say;

you must not copy them;

your Father knows your needs before you ask him."

"If two of you agree on earth about anything you pray for, it shall be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three have gathered in my name, I am there among them."

"Whenever you stand up to pray, if you have anything against anybody, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you."

"If you forgive men their trespasses,

then your heavenly Father will forgive you;

but if you do not forgive men,

your Father will not forgive your trespasses either."

"If your brother sins, check him, and if he repents, forgive him." Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often is my brother to sin against me and be forgiven? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "Seven times? I say, seventy times seven! That is why the Realm of

heaven may be compared to a king who resolved to settle accounts with his servants. When he began the settlement, a debtor was brought in who owed him three million pounds; as he was unable to pay, his master ordered him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, in payment of the sum. So the servant fell down and prayed him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you it all.' And out of pity for that servant his master released him and discharged his debt. But as that servant went away, he met one of his fellow-servants who owed him twenty pounds; and seizing him by the throat he said, 'Pay your debt.' So his fellow-servant fell down and implored him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' But he refused; he went and had him thrown into prison, till he should pay the debt. Now when his fellow-servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and explained to their master all that had happened. Then the master summoned him and said, 'You scoundrel of a servant! I discharged all that debt for you, because you implored me. Ought you not to have had mercy on your fellow-servant as I had on you?' And in hot anger his master handed him over to the torturers, till he should pay him all the debt. My heavenly Father will do the same to you, unless you each forgive your brother from the heart."

*

THE PATTERN PRAYER

Like all the great sayings of Jesus, the petitions of His model prayer are a challenge to our thought and spiritual sincerity, and countless studies have been published dealing with the implications of what is at once the simplest and yet the most profound of all prayers. As our space is restricted, it seemed wiser to include here a series of brief meditations on the meaning of the Lord's Prayer from the

pen of one writer, rather than attempt to take extracts from the many great books that have been written round this theme. These studies are by Dr. James Reid, and are taken from his book, The Temple in the Heart.

(1) *On the Threshold*

“When ye pray, say Our Father.”—Luke xi. 2.

Many fine things have been said about the Lord's Prayer. One of the best is a saying of Marcus Dods. “Though we learned it at our mother's knee, its petitions would take a lifetime to give them all their meaning, and an eternity to give them all their answer.” The prayer was Christ's answer to a request of the disciples. No one seeing Jesus at prayer could doubt that something real was happening there. So they asked to be taught to pray. That is our biggest need. When we have learned to pray, we shall no longer be troubled by the question whether prayer is answered. For we shall know by experience that it is. But we shall be looking for something more than cut and dried answers. We shall be seeking and knowing God Himself. And He is greater than all His gifts.

Jesus begins by giving us the keynote of prayer. “When ye pray, say Our Father.” The heart that can say “Our Father” has learned the first lesson in prayer. That is where we must begin, or prayer will bring us little, for we will not have established the true contact with God. The start of all prayer is in a true thought of God. All real religion rises from that spring. It is the same with our approach to God as it is with our approaches to our fellows. What we will ask of anyone will depend on what we think of him. There are people from whom we would not dream of asking anything. There are some to whom we would not dream of taking our troubles. We know them to be hard or unsympathetic, and that thought of them holds us back. It stems prayer at its source.

It is the same with our approach to God. Some of the difficulty we have in prayer may lie here. Our thought of God may be incomplete. There are dark shadows on the picture. These may come from false teaching we had in childhood. They may come from looking at God through the blurred windows of some hard or bitter experience. Some shadows may come from the stains of guilt or shame that darken our conscience and are projected on the face of God. A picture thrown on the screen may have lines or blotches on it that are not in the picture itself. They come from the lantern glass through which the light is thrown. And the whole picture is marred or dim. Our thought of God may be distorted by something in ourselves.

There is only one place to look for the picture of God. It is in the face of Jesus Christ. Some of us forget that the New Testament comes after the Old, and without the New the Old is incomplete. "All the time," says Struthers, of Greenock, "God was just wearying to show them Jesus." He longed to show us Jesus because He wanted us to know Himself. For through the ages He has been "the great Misunderstood."

The central light of that picture of God is never dim. God is longing to give. That is His kind of love. He is Father. He is like every true father at his best, and better than the best of us. We have our points of selfishness, yet we long to give our children all that is best. How much more God the Father! Christ bids us rest on that, and trust it all the way.

God's father-love is infinitely wise. He will not give us what would in the end destroy or disable us. But there are blessings that can only come with the burdens, and purifying that can only come through pain. Some of the things He gives may look very doubtful, but we need not fear to take them from His hands.

This love of His is an individual thing. His care is

for each of us, one by one. Jesus strove to make that clear. He knew how our hearts sometimes sink within us when we think of the masses and masses of people round us. How can God single us out? We get a lost and lonely feeling. But it is just the lost and lonely people that God searches out. Maybe we realize our loneliness just that He might find us. "How think ye if a man lose one sheep, if a woman lose one piece of silver, if a man lose one son?" It is always the "one" that matters. That is the kind of father God is.

This father-love of God flames into blazing reality in the Cross. There was nothing sentimental about it. The Cross proves that. Nothing can be so numbing to the spirit as excruciating pain. But even through all the horror and cruelty that gathered round Him, Christ saw God's perfect love. He hailed God there as Father. And what He saw amid the clouds and darkness His own heart mirrored in a love for men that is the miracle of history. The first step, then, is to let Christ speak to us of God, and to listen to no other voice. It is to let that love sink in till it conquers all the fear and the fret, and our hearts leap up to say "Our Father."

That is the root of all confidence in prayer. It is not hard to talk to the Father about everything. We can tell Him of our troubles, of the sick child at home, of the lad at school or college about whom we are anxious. We can tell Him of our need for bread, of the hard struggle to make ends meet. We can tell Him of our doubts. We can confess how hard we find it sometimes to trust Him, and how difficult it is to pray. For He knows it all and understands. And what a relief it is to tell Him all the things we often keep to ourselves. We imagine we have to put them right before we can come to Him, when the only way to put them right is just to bring them to Him and open them up to His love.

We can tell Him, too, our struggles; how hard it is

to be patient, or to get on with certain people. We can tell Him our sins and weaknesses, the sense of failure and uselessness that comes over us when we see the plague of our own hearts. We need not be afraid. For He knows it all and understands. "If our heart condemn us, God is Greater than our heart and knoweth all things."

But it is not "*my* Father" Christ bids us say. It is "*our* Father." We have to get that clear. We shall not ask for things that mean the hurt of others. As we realize His fatherhood, the family feeling comes to us. We begin to include others. The people we do not like, the people we are anxious about, the people who do not know Him, are all His children. He is their Father too. Resentment and prejudice begin to die in that atmosphere of home. For the world begins to have the feel of home when we call God "Father." Our hearts grow tender. Our vision widens until—

"The whole round earth is everywhere
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God."

(2) *Hallowing the Name*

"Hallowed be Thy Name."—Luke xi. 2.

Christ always puts first things first. And the first petition in the Lord's Prayer is that God's Name may be hallowed. Real prayer is the focus-point of the deepest desires of our lives. The meaning of this petition is that our first desire must be for God's glory. It is not easy when our hearts are throbbing with the pain of some sharp need to seek God's glory. But His glory is the secret of our own best good. The quickest way out of the Slough of Despond or the prison of selfish care is just to seek that His love and His purpose may be exalted in our lives. When God takes first place in our desire and our reverence, the things that fret and fray our spirits lose their power and the calm of His peace is restored.

The meaning of this petition becomes clear when we think of the Name which Christ has just given to God: "Our Father." It is this Name which is to be hallowed. Nothing is to be allowed to desecrate for us God's name of Father. For there are things that constantly threaten it.

We are tempted sometimes, for instance, to think of God as a kind of fate—a soulless force. Thomas Hardy closes the tragic story of Tess with these words: "The President of the Immortals had finished his sport with Tess." That is how he thought of God. The same temptation may come to us. It is strange how the belief in luck or chance still haunts our minds. There are Christian people who will still not sit down to dinner in a party of thirteen. It gives some of us a queer feeling, even though we do not allow the superstition to influence us. We do not think it out, of course. But it means that somehow we feel that there is a region where God does not rule, or where His father-love does not carry. It is the outbreak of primitive fear. But to give way to it is the desecration of God's Name. It is the denial of His Fatherhood. We cannot always trace what brings trouble into our life. But we can be sure that there is order in the process. If we could trace it all out we could see the chain of cause and effect that brought the misfortune. We would find that the end of that chain is held in the strong, wise hands of Almighty Love.

Again, God's name of Father is often threatened by the feeling that He is a taskmaster. Burdens fall and duties are laid on us one by one. Sometimes they seem more than we can bear. There is no escape from the necessity of carrying our load. But at times we resent it. We would like to throw it off. We cannot see why our load should be so heavy, and that of others so light. We grow sullen and peevish, and life becomes a dreary round without purpose or meaning. We have forgotten that behind it there is a Father who calls us to a service in

which He works with us for a plan that is worth while. Christ had a special message for the weary and heavy-laden. He did not come to lift that burden from our shoulders. He came to take the sense of strain and friction from our hearts. "Take my yoke," He said, and a yoke is meant for two. It is a yoke that He shares with us. Duty may be a chain. But it is a golden chain, for it binds us to Him. And in time we shall learn to thank Him that He gave us the privilege. Even the wash-tub or the bench can be the place of living fellowship with Him.

But suffering and sorrow can darken His face for us, and desecrate His Name if we let them. It is so easy to blame God for it all, and to carry in our hearts the feeling of bitterness or resentment. Why should this happen to us? Something must be wrong with the world, and God has been unfair. So we talk to ourselves. And into our hearts comes the dark shadow of enmity towards God. We forget that one of the real qualities of faith is just loyalty. Loyalty is part of all friendship, even with our fellows. If misunderstanding comes, or a friend does something which seems unfriendly, we must at least be loyal. We must believe that there is some misunderstanding. We must give our friend the benefit of the doubt. No friendship can last without this loyalty. And loyalty is also the very heart of faith. If we cannot understand we can at least trust the Father. And it is better to trust than to understand. The world in which we live is like a house in the building. The scaffolding surrounds it, hiding its growing beauty. The dust of labour shrouds it. The walls look half a ruin. How can order and beauty ever come out of it? So we might ask. But the architect has his plan. Give him time and one day we shall see and be satisfied.

For some of us also the thought of God's Fatherhood may be threatened by the shadows that conscience brings. We have done what we know we should not have done.

And the sense of guilt falls on us, darkening everything. It seems as if God were standing over us demanding an ideal we cannot reach and yet from which we cannot escape. There is something very real in this experience. It is wrong to try to brush away this feeling of guilt as something morbid. In *The Scarlet Letter* we have the picture of a man who is in the grip of guilt. But in his tormented spirit he knew that he dared not try to banish it. For had he done so, he realized that he would have passed into an unreal world. The sense of guilt is the shadow cast upon us by the purity and holiness of God. But behind it there is the Father's love. He refuses to let us fall below our best. Amid the shadows of guilt that darken His face He is still the Father calling us to live with Him in a world of goodness in which He is able to give us power to live, and which He is bidding us enter through His forgiveness. He is calling us to become in a new way His children.

The people of the Bible believed that there was power in a name. If they knew a man's name, they felt they had some hold over him. However this may be, to know God's Name and hold it fast is to give Him power over us. It is to keep open through everything a road for His grace and love. For God makes Himself known to those who trust Him. To hold on to this is the key to victory. Whatever life may be doing to us we have our hands on the secret of peace and power, if through everything we look to Him and say "Our Father."

(3) *The Rule of the Father*

"Thy Kingdom come."—Luke xi. 2.

When we know God as Father it is natural that we should want His Kingdom to come. The world's need is that He who is Father should rule. At the moment it is like a home without the authority of the father. It is a

family without the family spirit. Our very closeness to one another is our danger. We have the power to hurt one another terribly, but not the love to help one another deeply. If only God would rule! That is what it means for His Kingdom to come.

Why does He not rule? It seems so simple when He has the power. If we had the power we would use it. So we often think. The world seems to have a craving for some strong hand to take the tiller of their lives and steer them. In some countries men who have been able to get the power have seized it, and the people have submitted or even welcomed them in a kind of despair. There is an opportunity in the world to-day for dictators. Many are willing to give up their freedom in order to be ruled. The burden of ordering their own lives seems to be too heavy. The world is too big for us to manage by our own wisdom. Why does not God rule in this compelling way? He has the power and the wisdom and the love. Why does not He take the throne and rule?

We must, however, be clear in our minds about the method of God's rule. He is not merely King, He is Father. We are not His slaves or His subjects, but His children. It would be easy for Him to compel us to do His will. It would be easy for Him to make us submit to His command. But by that compulsion we should lose our freedom. We should be His slaves, not His children. Love cannot compel. It can only win our loyalty. The will cannot be forced, though we may have to submit. The will can only be yielded to one whom we love, and to a rule that we see and desire as right and good. It is a long process for God to win this surrender of our hearts. The victory of God is by a long, hard road. It is the road to Calvary, and Jesus went that way, that through His suffering God's love might win its victory. It is the only way by which the rule of the Father can come.

When we pray this prayer we ought to picture what

God's rule would mean. We need imagination in our religion and in our prayers. The best things in the world have come because people used their imagination. What they saw kindled their desire and set them to work. When Livingstone tramped the wilderness and the jungle of Africa he saw something more than the disease and cruelty around him. That alone would have taken the heart out of him. He saw Africa changed, the slave-trade gone. He saw her set free and at the feet of Christ. The thought of what God's Kingdom would mean if it came on earth will make us long for it in a new way. It would mean peace among the nations. The spirit of brotherhood would come. The slums would be banished. Strife and oppression would cease. Imagine the world become a home and all in it a family. Who would not long for it?

The only way in which wrong things can be put right is by God's rule of love becoming effective. For us who believe in Christ there is no other way. The root of evil runs deep. And its real cure must be as deep as the disease. When we think of all that needs to be changed it is so easy to fall into despair, and to feel our helplessness. But it is good to remember that God's favourite place of operation is the region of the impossible. And where we are powerless He works if we give Him opportunity. Our prayer is God's opportunity. Do we really pray definitely and with our hearts for the coming of God's rule? Do we think of this one and that; of the people who lead and who carry responsibility? We criticize them. Do we pray for them? If we did, it may be that God's love would be heard knocking at some doors that seem hopelessly closed. And where that knock is heard, some day the handle will be turned to let Him in.

But there is something more we can do. God's way into any place in which we are, is through us. That is where our responsibility lies. Our business, for instance, is part of the world we are asking the Father to rule.

What of His Kingdom there? What of working with others in the family spirit? Or what of our home? That can be a little bit of the Kingdom of God. In many homes there is love, but it does not rule. Our wills clash. There is conflict of temperaments. So we often call it. There are unconfessed resentments. Home ought to be the unit of God's Kingdom. In it the life of the Kingdom should be found and practised. Love has the opportunity there to be at its best, and we can know what it fully means. There are two readings of the saying of Christ about lighting a candle. One is that it may give light to all that are in the house. A real religion will begin its penetrating work in the home. The other is that it may give light to all that come into the house. It will reach the outsider through the home into which he comes.

But the Kingdom begins within ourselves. Our heart is a world in itself. God's rule must begin there. "The Kingdom of God is within you." It was because the first Christians knew that inner victory of God's love that they could preach to the world. Because of what God had done in their own hearts they had hope and vision for the world without. This prayer is not a reality unless we are offering God the throne within. Years ago a young man who went to the front sent his mother his keys. In a letter he told her, "I am giving you the keys of all my drawers, every one." Praying for God's Kingdom means giving Him all the keys—the power to open every door within. Then comes peace. When we have the peace of God's rule within, His Kingdom comes in us and we know there is power in that love to bring all men in.

(4) *Doing God's Will*

"Thy will be done as in heaven, so in earth."—Luke xi. 2.

Most people when the will of God is mentioned feel a cold shadow creeping over them. The will of God has

been so often applied to the misfortunes of life. If a thing is hard it must be the will of God, and we have just got to submit. So some people think. And when sorrow or sickness comes, they try to say, "Thy will be done."

Of course one can understand the comfort of it. It is a great solace when we have lost a beloved child to feel that God willed it. It is a comfort when some accident or misfortune strikes us to feel that God somehow sent it. It delivers us from the soulless hand of fate. It is a real help to feel that it happened because God knows best. Some fine souls have found healing and peace in that faith.

But this belief is not easy to hold if we begin to ask questions. And it has not always been good for people to hold it, for it has sometimes made them resigned to evils which they should have opposed. If God sends disease why try to cure it? If misfortunes are sent by God to try us, why should we always do our best to avoid them?

Some have gone to the other extreme. They have said that God has nothing to do with our sickness or sorrow. But can this be so? He is Father, and things ought not to go on in the home that are out of the control of His wisdom and love. And we cannot believe that they do. There is no part of the jungle of life which He cannot control for His purposes. Jesus has shown us how this control can be exercised. There is a way of facing things by which God can co-operate with us to use them for our good. He has shown us that way. He has blazed the trail through the jungle of pain, and when we catch His Spirit we can meet the trouble so that it becomes a blessing. Sickness is not the deliberate act of God, but Christ's way of meeting it is the way of God's will. That is what we ought to mean when in trouble we pray "Thy will be done."

But there are beautiful things in the will of God. Since

God is Father His will must include all that is good. God's will means health, for instance. He wants disease to be conquered. It must be His will that His children should be fed and cared for where they cannot provide for themselves. The slums of our cities cannot be the will of the Father. He would not have such rooms and cellars in His house. He has put us in the world to make it a home for all His children. It is His will that we should get to work to clean it up. It cannot be His will that we should fill the rooms of His house with deadly explosives and weapons of war with which to kill each other. We may have to restrain some from harming themselves and the rest of the family. But it cannot be His will that we should hate and fear and kill each other. Doing His will means creating fellowship and peace.

We should think of God's will in this positive way. All the things that make for a better world are the will of God for us. It is time we saw it in that light. This prayer should not be a moan of resignation. It should be a song set to joyful music. Why should we always identify the will of God with something unpleasant? Some of us have an idea that if there are two roads open and one of them is hard and disagreeable, that one must be the will of God. It is good, of course, to keep the balance on that side. We are so apt to choose the pleasant way just because it is easy. But it does not always follow that the unpleasant thing is the right thing.

Some of the misunderstanding may have come from leaving out the last clause of the prayer, "as in heaven so in earth." What could Christ mean by that? He means that we should do His will joyfully and from the heart. There must be no sullenness and no resentment. Love must be the motive. If we love people enough it is a joy to do what they want done. We have not really seen the Father as He is until we can say, "I delight to do Thy will, O my God." We may need to learn that God's

will is best by taking our own way and finding it stupid and foolish. Sometimes we can learn in no other way. But we must seek to have Him kindle in us that love to Him which makes His way clear to us and also makes obedience to it a joy. The place where self-will is cast out and God's will becomes first is at the Cross. There the hard core of self will be melted by love, till doing what God wants done is a joy.

But in heaven surely God's will is done with perfect knowledge. How can we know what is God's will? It is one thing to be ready to do it. It is another thing to be clear about what God wants us to do. Many sad mistakes have been made by people who imagined they were doing God's will. We sometimes speak as if conscience were the voice of God. But it is only the medium of His voice. It is like a wireless receiver taking silent messages and making them audible. But our conscience may not be a very good receiver. The messages may be distorted. Conscience may be dull or insensitive. It needs education. The only way is to be constantly open to Christ and to His Spirit as we find Him in the Gospels. It is to learn from Him. One of R. L. Stevenson's stories was left unfinished, and the last chapters were added after his death by another writer. The latter has told us how he was able to do it in the same style. He had to know Stevenson's mind, to understand the plan of his book, to catch his spirit; so for months he read nothing but Stevenson, till he caught his style. We shall know God's will and do it naturally and simply as we live close enough to Christ to have His mind and be possessed by His purpose. To become daily more sensitive to God's will is the inner meaning of prayer.

(5) *Our Daily Bread*

"Give us this day our daily bread."—Luke xi. 3.

It seems a descent to come from praying about God's will to asking for daily bread. Some writers have suggested that Christ meant the bread of the Spirit, but He was talking to simple people who were very conscious of the need of bread. Hunger is the strongest of our appetites. The need of bread makes life a constant struggle. It has created revolutions and riots, and even wars. It is the root of much of our anxiety and worry. We cannot help bringing our need for bread into our prayers if we are honest, for "Prayer is the soul's sincere desire." A good part of our time must be given to thinking and planning about daily bread.

God knows all about this need. He has made us with this hunger. Without it the earth would never have been developed; our best discoveries would never have been made. This need for bread sends us to work day by day, and keeps us at it. And God has provided the supply. Christ bids us look at the flowers and the birds. No artist in dress could produce a garment to outmatch in colour and design the garb of the humblest flower. The food of the commonest bird is part of His providing and His infinite care. Most of us live out of touch with nature. Our food comes to us from the factory or the bakery. We are apt to forget that it is all God's gift. The mark of miracle is on every grain of wheat. He knows our physical needs. And so we may bring them to Him. We may come to Him and tell Him everything, our fear about to-morrow, the trouble in the business, the needs of our children. And we may ask Him for daily bread and know that He will help us to get it. The real escape from worry is to take things to Him. "In nothing be anxious," says Paul, "but," he goes on, "in everything by prayer and supplication let your requests be made known unto God."

That means telling Him our need for daily bread.

Perhaps we may ask why, since He provides, we need to ask Him. Christ does not mean that prayer should take the place of work. And if we have work that will bring bread, why pray about it?

This hunger of ours, like other instincts, is a mighty force. It has driven people to do desperate things. It can be, like other instincts, a dangerous force if it is not directed aright. There are two ways in which we can use this hunger. We can either make it a merely material thing, and keep it out of our religion and our fellowship with God. Or we can put it into God's hands, asking Him to direct it and help us to satisfy it rightly. Some people take the first way. They keep religion out of their work and their business. They let the need for bread take hold of them till it becomes feverish greed. They want not only bread for to-day, which is all Christ bids us ask for, but bread in abundance for to-morrow as well. They crave for security. They fill their barns and build greater, till they have come to settle down in selfish luxury. The struggle for existence can become a very degrading thing.

The right thing to do with this hunger is to open it up to God. That is the way in which it can become safe and right both for ourselves and others. For prayer cleanses it from selfish greed. Prayer takes the bitterness out of the struggle. It takes the strain from the heart. We all need this outlet towards God. Some of us have a hard lot. Work and money are very uncertain. There are the children to be fed. The strain of the struggle is wearing us out. Some of us may be seeking more security than God means us to have. Our life is full of the fear of to-morrow, even though at the moment we have enough. God does not mean us to live like that. He means us to trust Him while we do our best. He bids us make the earning of our bread a partnership with Him. He knows our need, and if we trust Him, the need will be supplied.

Strained work is always poor work. "My God shall supply all your need." So Paul wrote from a prison where he had proved it.

But that means that our needs must be simplified. It may be that we shall have to be content with simple things. Perhaps our demands need to be brought to the light of God's standards of efficiency. Jesus put the prayer for doing the will of God and for His Kingdom before that for daily bread. If we pray about material things in this spirit, there are some that we shall cease to ask for. We shall be content to have them or not as God wills. We shall learn the power both to manage plenty and to face poverty.

But the prayer is not "Give me." It is "Give us." The Lord's Prayer is social all through. It is always "us," never "me." And this is most true of the prayer for bread. Christ tells a story of a youth who went into life saying "Give me." And he ended that part of his career alone, and hungry to the point of starvation. We are very slow to learn the lesson. Sharing is the road to possessing. Co-operation is the secret of abundance. The wheels of industry are being slowed up or are standing still because we refuse to co-operate with one another. The selfish spirit can never be the driving power of life without, in the end, causing the machinery to break down. That is the lesson which our present economic distress is bringing home to us. Many are hungry to-day because the world has not learned it. Christ bids us learn it for ourselves that we may help the world to learn it too. The key which opens the kingdom of earth is found when we are seeking the Kingdom of God. And in this prayer Christ puts it into our hands.

(6) *The Forgiveness of Sins*

"Forgive us our sins."—Luke xi. 4.

No prayer can be complete without a petition about our sins. Some people object to this constant occupation with our sins. It seems a lack of what they imagine is "healthy-mindedness." But Jesus puts the need of forgiveness alongside of the need of bread. Something is wrong with our body if it is not aware at times of hunger. And something is wrong with the soul if there is not a longing for forgiveness. The sense of sin is one of the signs of a healthy soul.

"They who fain would love Thee best
Are conscious most of wrong within."

The sense of sin is the greatest lack in the lives of most of us. We are very sensitive in these days to disease. But we do not feel deeply the broken laws, the worry and fear, that are the roots of it. We think a great deal about the slums. Their ugliness and sordidness nauseate us. But we do not feel as we ought the shame of our corporate responsibility for these things. It is the lack of love which really keeps them in being. There are slums in the world because there is a slum in our hearts. We are distressed by the friction and strain that often spoil the sweetness of home. But we do not deeply realize the self-will and pride that lie behind these things. It is sin which is the secret root of all our trouble. The beginning of a new world would be found if we learned to pray the prodigal's prayer—"Father, I have sinned." When he had come to this conviction he had come to himself. He had begun to see things clearly. He had come to know himself. He had taken the first step into a new life.

For what is sin when you get down to it? It is not

an act, though it results in various kinds of wrong actions. It is a condition. It is the refusal to live as the children of the Father. It is the rejection of God's fellowship and of life in that fellowship. That refusal may be unconscious. It may come through blindness to the love of God, and to all that love asks of us. Or it may come through definite and deliberate self-will. We want our own way. We hate the hard road of right or duty. We prefer the pleasant meadows of pleasure or pride or self-indulgence. That in itself produces blindness to God's love. The more we disobey, the less we feel the challenge of conscience, the less sensitive we become to the gentle voice within. Sin deadens the heart to all that is best. As Burns put it out of his own experience:

"It hardens a' within,
And petrifies the feeling."

It was, in part, to awaken the sense of sin that Jesus died. When we see the Cross we see what sin is. It is the kind of thing which makes a world in which the Son of God was not allowed to live. If we only stood long enough before the Cross, we would become aware of things in ourselves and in our lives which would produce the cry for forgiveness.

But what is it we are asking when we pray for forgiveness? It is for nothing less than restoration to God's fellowship. The word "forgiveness" is an inadequate word. Jesus used it because He found it ready to His hand. But He put into it a meaning that made it entirely new. We think of it still as the cancellation of a debt. We owe to God a devotion, a love, which we have refused. In our refusal we have said things and done things which have put blots on the pages of life. And when we ask forgiveness, we ask that He will erase these blots and forget them. We ask that He will not hold them against us. And with that we may be content. But God is not

content with that. In point of fact, there are things done which cannot be undone. We cannot recall the ugly word. The broken law may go on registering itself in some weakness of body. It may be that some shameful act of ours has poisoned the life of another who has passed beyond our influence. Our tears cannot wash away the results of it. Some people carry through life the burden and the sorrow of lives which they have hurt, and even the sense of God's forgiveness brings no peace. What does Christ mean by forgiveness?

He really means the restoration to God's fellowship. Nothing less than this is what He offers. And nothing less than this is what Christ bids us ask. His forgiveness means all that it meant in the father's welcome to the returning prodigal. It means the full rights of sonship, with nothing between to cloud the love. He will never hold our sin against us. "Our sins and our iniquities he will remember no more." "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." It is as complete as that. To realize this, in itself is unutterably wonderful. But what is more, He gives us all we need for living the life of His children. We come to Him with our forfeited sonship, in rags and shame. And He takes us to Himself as His children. He gives us the robe of His righteousness, and a ring which is the symbol of the love that never lets go.

But there is something even more. What of the kind of world we have made for ourselves by the things we have done, the mistakes and the selfishness? What of the things that have passed beyond recall and have wrought havoc in the home or the lives of others? There is a glorious answer. He takes responsibility for our whole situation if we put it into His hands. Through His fellowship it can be redeemed, as we let His Spirit direct us. There is nothing with such hope in it as the message of forgiveness. We may not see all the transforming

results, but we can leave that burden with Him, and He will carry it.

Only we must be sincere. We must be willing to seek and to claim all that forgiveness means. We must be ready to enter fully into the life of fellowship with the Father in everything. That is what it means to say "Forgive us our sins."

(7) *The Forgiving Spirit*

"Forgive us as we forgive."—Luke xi. 4.

These words put a big strain on our sincerity. As we forgive! But this is the condition that Christ lays down. And it is absolute. There is no escape from it. He told a story to make it clear. It was the story of a man with a debt he could not pay. This debt was cancelled by the kindness of the creditor, but the debtor who had been forgiven refused to forgive others a smaller debt which they owed to him. The result was that those who had forgiven him withdrew their kindness and cast him into prison till he should pay his debt to the full. Christ laid down this condition with all the emphasis He could: "If ye will not forgive, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you."

What does it involve? He cannot mean that we can win God's forgiveness of ourselves by our forgiveness of others. For in our relation to God we are in the realm of mercy, not of merit. But our willingness to forgive is the test of our willingness to live as God's children. And it is only when we are willing to come into this new relationship to God that His forgiveness can become a reality and a power. If we have a resentment or a grudge against another which we are unwilling to give up, we are not yet open to His love. The gates are locked against the entrance of His Spirit into our hearts. His forgiving love cannot get to work in us and for us. Pride or anger is

holding the citadel within. Self is still on the throne. Let us think it out.

As we forgive! How deep does our forgiveness go? Let us examine some of our relationships. Here is someone who has wronged us, or has done something of which we strongly disapprove. How deep does our forgiveness go? We hold them at arm's length. Or we treat them with a certain coldness. We may not actually seek to do them an injury, but we do not want to be friends. We find it hard to forget or to be natural and kindly with them. There is always that secret grudge chilling our spirit. We have no great interest in what happens to them. If they get into trouble we should not feel any great regret. Is that the extent to which we would like God to forgive us? As we forgive! How would it be with us if God stood aloof from us like that in a peevish indifference or sullen resentment?

As we forgive! We must apply this word in relation to others as widely and fully as Christ applies the forgiveness of God. It means for one thing that we must definitely get rid of the resentment or the grudge. "As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us." That is the measure of His forgiveness. It is absolute. He lets nothing stand between us and Him. The past is buried. So God forgives. And our forgiveness must mean the same complete reconciliation to our brother in our hearts.

It means even more than that if we are to forgive as God forgives. It means the active desire to restore the other to friendship. We must be willing to come into a new relation with him or her, so that we can help each other. For that is what God's forgiveness means. Nothing less is worth while. Perhaps we say to ourselves by way of excuse that we cannot forgive people till they are ready to be forgiven. How can we forgive till they are ready to tell us they are sorry, and to ask for our pardon?

That sounds reasonable. But in many cases it is only an excuse. And it falls short of what God does. For His forgiveness is more than His answer to the cry of our penitence. It is the going forth towards us of His love, to create in us the penitent spirit, and to make us ready to be forgiven. Think of Christ on the Cross. His last cry was the prayer that His enemies might be forgiven. It was the going forth of His forgiving love, seeking to awaken in them the desire for forgiveness. And it worked. It touched the soul of the thief by His side, so that he felt his need, and asked for the gift of that healing love. The spirit of God's children is the spirit that longs to be reconciled to others, and seeks to heal the breach. It is not easy to take this reconciling way. Christ is asking a very hard thing of us. For pride bars the way and forbids. Yet that is the condition on which Christ bids us pray. Only to this forgiving spirit does He promise the forgiveness of God.

We do not always realize how important it is. It may be the crucial point in a vital experience of Christ. There are various kinds of barriers that keep Him out of our lives, and when we come to take Him seriously we find them out. The most common barrier is in our relationship with others. There is a cold, hard bit of pride lurking in us. And the test of our willingness to let Christ into our life is our willingness to let these things go. It may mean taking some step which will humiliate us. It is not easy to get rid of a long-cherished grievance. It may help us to do it if we realize that a wrong or bitter spirit is a heavy load to carry. Hate and antagonism may sometimes seem to give us a subtle pleasure. But a wrong spirit always brings unhappiness to ourselves. It is a kind of bondage. When land is being brought under cultivation, there are sour places that have to be drained. Hatred is a kind of swamp in the mind breeding poison.

It may help us also if we remember that it is through

our human love that God gets into the lives of others. Some people can only realize the forgiveness of God through the forgiveness of their fellows. A man who recently found Christ tells how he first felt the love of God through the wonderful forgiveness of some people whom he met. He had been half afraid to meet them lest they should despise him and make him feel an outcast. But when they accepted him as a brother without any trace of blame or coldness, the wonderful light of God's forgiving love broke in. It may be there are some around us who are waiting to find God's love through our forgiveness of them.

But if we are willing, Christ can take away the resentment and the bitterness. A little time of waiting in spirit before the Cross will help to cleanse it away. We will become so conscious of our own weakness that we will have nothing but pity for the weaknesses of others. We may not be able to see their sins when we have seen our own. Pride will be broken, so that His love can come into our hearts. And in that love, other people will become lovable. We shall become weary of strife and misunderstanding, and filled with the longing to reconcile. It may mean taking the way of the Cross to do it, and accepting suffering and misunderstanding and humiliation. But that is the authentic road. Our forgiveness cost Him all that and more.

"It is the way the Master went.
Shall not the servant tread it still?"

(8) *Out of Temptation*

"Lead us not into temptation."—Matt. vi. 13.

This is a difficult prayer to pray. It is not because it is hard to ask, but because it is difficult to understand. We have been taught to think that temptation is a useful thing. It is a prelude to sin, indeed, for it is through

temptation that sin enters our life. But we know that without temptation no man could win character. Temptation is a form of choice. It is the choice between the evil and the good. Life makes to us various kinds of appeal. It appeals to our pride, to greed, to fear on the one hand. And it appeals to our unselfishness, to our love for others, to our courage. We are constantly aware, if we are living seriously, of a conflict of choices. And the lower choice is what we call a temptation. Without this conflict and the victory over temptation which we can win, we would become flabby. Life would just be drifting with the stream. We would not develop strength of character. The growth of personality comes through conflict and victory. "No man has been through the university of life till he has been well tempted." Even Christ had His temptations. He must have told the story of them Himself. He had to go into the desert to think out His methods and make His choice of the road He was to follow. And the choice faced Him in three different ways, so we are told. In all three He overcame the temptation to take the lower way. His soul was stronger and His mind clearer through that victory. It helped Him later on when He had to meet these same temptations in the actual circumstances of life. Even the last steps on the way to Calvary were preceded by the struggle in Gethsemane. Here, then, is our difficulty. If temptation is useful and inevitable, how can we ask God not to lead us into it?

The difficulty has been met by a new translation of these words which reads, "Let us not yield to temptation." But if we think deeply we may feel that that reading misses something. The ordinary reading is a prayer for God's leading. It is the only petition for guidance which the Lord's Prayer contains. Can we not think of circumstances in which we might want to pray that God would so lead us that we should not fall into temptation?

For one thing, it is surely wrong to take needless risks. It is a perilous thing to play with evil. Most of us are very prone to seek for things in life which would bring us into moral peril without considering the risks we run. If duty calls it is right to take risks. But if we are merely seeking pleasure or enjoyment, it is another matter. A man may ply his boat in the waters above the cataract without danger if he keep at a certain distance from the falls. He may make pleasure excursions and be unharmed, but there is a point beyond which the grip of the current will be too strong for him. He would be a fool to risk it except in an emergency of need or duty. It is the same with ourselves. There are situations in which we have no right to take moral risks. We are not here just to enjoy ourselves or to taste experiences. We are here to do the will of God and to seek His Kingdom. Christ said many hard things which had sound sense behind them. "If thine eye or thy foot offend thee, cut them off and cast them from thee." No experience is worth enjoying at the peril of our souls. Friendship and pleasure are the gifts of God. But if in seeking these we must expose ourselves to a big temptation, there is just one thing to do. It is to avoid them. It is for this kind of leading that Christ bids us pray. There is a sensitive plant whose leaves curl up at every threat of injury. Christ bids us pray for such sensitiveness to evil that we shall become aware of danger and avoid it.

But there is something deeper. The more we become attuned to His will, the less some things will tempt us. His hope for us is that we may come to a point of vitality where certain things will cease to tempt us. Their appeal will fall on deaf ears. He said of Himself, after the last victory, "The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me." There is such a thing in our physical nature as the power of resisting disease. We have to live in the world as we find it. In certain cases it may be pos-

sible to make our dwelling among clean mountain air and keep our health. For most of us this is not possible. What we have to do is to gain and keep the physical vitality which can overcome the germs of disease. It is that kind of resisting power which Christ would have us win.

We find it as we are led more deeply into His fellowship. We escape temptation in the right way by allowing ourselves to be guided by God. If our way is chosen at the bidding of caprice and selfishness, we shall meet with temptation, and shall not be able to resist it. But if our first desire is that God should guide, if we are seeking His Kingdom all the time, everything will be changed. New interests will awaken. Pride and fear and greed will die. We shall become conscious of the things that appeal to our true selves. More and more the best things in life will have power over us. We shall become enriched by the world without being ensnared by it. Even in situations that once were full of temptation, we shall be only aware of God's call to us.

The road of life we have to walk may be full of what might be temptation. God will not take us out of the world in order to save our souls. Are we in some place that is difficult? It may be God needs us there. But if we are there with Him and are following His guiding, we shall be more conscious of Him than we are of anything else. We shall fear no evil, for He is with us. "With the temptation He will provide a way of escape"—the shelter of His love, the shadow of Christ's Cross.

(9) *Deliverance from Evil*

"Deliver us from evil."—Matt. vi. 13.

This is the last petition in the Lord's prayer; it strikes a note of hope. God does not bid us ask for anything He does not mean to give. And deliverance from evil is one

of the gifts He has in keeping for us, till we are ready to claim it.

This is where most of us fail. Have we ever realized that victory over evil is possible and assured? God does not promise that we shall be kept from misfortune. Sorrow and trouble may invade our life. They are part of our human burden. And Christ bore it Himself to encourage us bravely to take our share. But God does promise that nothing that happens to us need bring us into moral defeat. Have we ever realized this? Have we claimed the fulness of His promised victory? Are there not things in our life with which we compromise because we do not really believe we can be free? John puts it very boldly: "He that is born of God doth not commit sin." Whatever may be tripping us up in the home, in our relationships with others, need not remain to baffle us. Christ meant us to claim the victory when He bade us pray for deliverance.

How this victory comes we do not need to understand. Countless people have found freedom just by claiming it. But it does help if we can see the way. The essential thing is that prayer brings us into a new climate. A man may struggle for life in a poisonous atmosphere, but the struggle will only exhaust him and increase his weakness. What he needs is an open window which will admit a stream of fresh air. Real prayer is like that. It is opening a window to let in a new atmosphere. It redirects our minds. It fixes our attention upon God and His power. And that is the secret of victory. It opens God's way into our lives. It brings us into the clean, vitalizing air of His Presence. "The fear of the Lord is clean," said the Psalmist.

The first effect of that new climate is that we begin to see sin for what it is, and thereby its grip is slackened. A good many things have power over us because we call them by soft or attractive names. We are irritable at

home, for instance. We call it tiredness. We say we are highly strung. Christ calls it sin. We are easy and self-indulgent with ourselves. We make excuses for it. Christ calls it sin. We are offended with certain people. We nurse resentments or carry our heads high. We call it legitimate pride. Christ calls it sin. The moment we really face up to His standards, we discover what poisonous things we have been harbouring in our lives, calling them by names that disguise their true nature. When we are face to face with Christ we know them for what they are. One night some people came home to find that their house had been burgled. The thief had taken all he could find. But in the drawing-room there was a silver crucifix which remained untouched. He had not dared to take that. And before he could touch anything else he had taken the crucifix and set it with the face to the wall. When Christ is allowed to look in on our life there are things we cannot do because we see them for what they are. In His light they became ugly and repulsive. And that is the first step to deliverance.

But there is more. In this new climate we become conscious of God's love and power. Things we had not realized before to be so lovely begin to shine for us. We see other people in His light. Their faults and follies begin to fall out of the picture. We see them as those whom God loves and whom He enables us to love. We realize the joy and beauty of Christ's kind of life. We discover that sin not only blots the pages of life; it is a waste of energy. It is like steam escaping from an engine. It is like water overflowing from a river, making the meadows stagnant. Christ wants that power. He wants all these instincts, whose force breaks out in shameful and ugly ways, for His Kingdom. And He can take them into His control and use them. Deliverance from evil is not a negative thing. It is the rescue of powers which are going wrong. It is like an orchestra in the hands of a master.

The instruments are not silenced. Their music is drawn into the harmony, blended together to make a melody that is rich and full. Christ is that kind of master. Deliverance from evil means having our powers transformed and blended into His kind of life.

We can only have this deliverance on one condition. It is that we are seeking His Kingdom with all our being. This prayer is not a short cut to purity or self-control. Some of us would like that. There are things we would like to get rid of on our own terms. We would like to be free from temper or impurity and the like, and yet be allowed to keep our own selfish way of life. We would like to have life patched and tinkered here and there, or get rid of this bad habit or that, and yet go on as we are living. God never solves our moral problems by cutting knots. It is only as we let Him possess the whole of life that He can renew it. It is only as He is allowed to renew it that He can set us free. What we call a little sin may be like a trifling pain. It may be the symptom of a deep-seated disease. It can only be cured by tackling the disease at the roots.

But our greatest need is to claim this deliverance. It would make a new thing of life if we opened our eyes to the possibility of victory over some things that we tolerate. Suppose we sit down and take a look into our life through the eyes of Christ. We would see things there that have no right to be in those who profess His name. He is waiting to give us deliverance the moment we are ready to take Him seriously and claim it. "If we confess our sin, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." It is *all* unrighteousness. Nothing less He offers. This is our birthright through His Cross. Can we be satisfied with less than He is willing to give?

CHAPTER TEN

TIMES AND SEASONS

THE Christian life is a balance between what is sometimes called the life of devotion and a life of service—times of receptive and intercessory prayer when we retreat from the world to be alone with God, from whom we draw the strength that will manifest itself as a generous outflow of love and service to the world.

We see this balance perfectly maintained in the life of Jesus, of whom we read that He “withdrew again into the mountain himself alone.” When He returned from such solitary communion with His Father, He found strength to maintain the spiritual level of His life.

If we neglect either devotion or service our life becomes eccentric—that is, it ceases to be centred in God. Devotion can degenerate into preoccupation with our own moods and feelings, to the neglect of the love and service that we owe to others. On the other hand our service, if cut away from the inspiration of love which is the gift of God, can easily become a means to self-gratification, or the expression of a desire to dominate others, or may simply wither away.

The balance between devotion and service is something that we each have to maintain for ourselves. In these days of strenuous and strident activity, however, the danger for most of us will be that we set aside insufficient time for prayer and meditation.

It is quite impossible to lay down invariable rules for everybody about the frequency or length of time that should be spent in prayer, but there is a kind of general guidance that we may accept both as concerning seasons in prayer, and the most effective preparation we can make before entering upon it. In this chapter, then, we will con-

sider what are likely to prove the best times for prayer and some simple rules in observing them.

*

ARE WE PREPARED TO GIVE THE TIME?

Let us begin with this passage in which Dr. James Reid reminds us that nothing can take the place of time spent in communion with God. It is taken from his book The Springs of Life.

This is a practical age. And among other things, we demand that religion should be practical. It is strange, in view of this, that the most practical thing Christ bade us do is often the thing least practised—the habit of prayer. For prayer is the shortest and surest way to God. Someone once went to Phillips Brooks with his doubts. He began with a list of the things he did not believe. “Let us begin with the things you do believe,” said Brooks. Whereupon the doubter said, “I believe that there is an intelligent power behind the world.” “Well,” replied the bishop, “if there is such a power, He must have some interest in us whom He has made. Let us see if we cannot get into touch with Him.” And together they knelt to pray.

Why is it, in face of Christ’s repeated counsels to pray and go on praying, that we do not pray more often or more persistently. Many reasons are given. But is not the deepest reason that we do not realize what God is waiting to give? Desire springs out of the sense of need, but the sense of need is often quickened by realizing what it is possible to receive. Every shopkeeper knows this fact. The aim of every advertisement is not to appeal to conscious needs, but to quicken desire by a description of wares which are at our disposal. That was Christ’s view of the situation in regard to prayer. It is not difficult to feel the

need when we see what God is ready to do for us. Then, prayer would rise like a fountain in our hearts. "If thou knewest the gift of God thou wouldst have asked."

Of course everything we have is the gift of God. Such things as health, food, beauty and friendship come into our lives unsought. And with these many are content. What we fail to realize is that there is a gift beyond these gifts. It can come to us only through His fellowship. The child in the home begins by receiving the things which home can provide. His parents only come into the picture as the means whereby they are provided. But the real gift of home is not found till he comes into a loving fellowship with his parents, and through that fellowship knows a counsel and guiding which is richer far than anything they can give, and through which even their gifts find meaning. It is the same with the world. The true secret of life, whatever its gifts may be, is not found till we come into that fellowship with God through which the world and everything in it becomes the medium of that love. That is why we need to pray in order to receive God's best. For prayer brings that fellowship, and with it what Christ calls "the gift of God."

How shall we describe this? It is, for one thing, wisdom to see the way and to guide our lives. There are many kinds of wisdom—scientific, commercial, political. And they are all useful. We cannot do without them. But there is a deeper wisdom which comes through insight into the mind and will of God. The world may call it foolishness. But there are tangles and difficulties meeting us every day in our relations with people and with life, for which knowledge and science are not enough. That wisdom is the gift of God.

And there is love. We are tempted to think that comes by natural affection. But does it? Read over the thirteenth of first Corinthians. "Love suffers long and is kind; love envieth not, thinketh no evil, beareth all things,

believeth all things." Is our ordinary loving big enough for that? Is it big enough to forgive, to stand in with people who wrong us and break our hearts? Is it great enough for the way of the Cross? That kind of love—the love that sent Christ to Calvary—is the love we most need in this difficult world. And that more than anything is the gift of God.

Or think of the power to help others. Most of us think we have that in ourselves until we really try. Then we find that what others in their deepest needs most want of us is the thing most difficult to give—the assurance of God. It is the contact with Him which kindles faith and love. "Thank you," said the gipsies to George Borrow, "for coming to us and giving us God." Think it out. We know quite well when we are face to face with some friend's personal problem, or the difficulty of helping someone fully, that the real need is a change of heart. The power to help people into the Kingdom of God is the most precious thing in life. It is the most satisfying. It gets to the real roots of our human trouble. And this power is the gift of God.

One could name other things. There is the peace that keeps the heart untroubled amid a shaking world. There is the joy that no one can take away from us, and which turns all artificial happiness to ashes. It is all summed up in what Christ calls eternal life—a quality, a vitality, of faith and courage and joy. Those who have it are in touch with the perennial fountain of life. It defies time to wither it or death to destroy it. And eternal life, as John says, is the gift of God.

Why do we not ask it and seek for it? How poor ordinary living is without this secret! A friend of John Newton wrote to him one day, "These people speak of the unsearchable riches of Christ. They speak of heights and depths and lengths and breadths of the love of Christ. It is something I know nothing of." And so he began to

seek. Think it out. Are we satisfied with what we are getting out of life? Is there something beyond us still which Christ has to give us and which we have not found? If we realized it nothing would stop us seeking it till we found. No sacrifice, no cost would be too great. Jesus knew that. He knew that the man who has seen what He is waiting to give becomes aware of the hollowness of everything else, and is ready to let it all go for this. "The Kingdom of Heaven," He said, "is like a merchantman seeking goodly pearls, who when he had found the pearl of great price went and sold all that he had, and bought it." If we knew the gift of God, we would give anything to get it. And the first thing we would give would be the time to pray to let God speak to us and show us His will, and fill our hearts with His own comfort and peace. For these cannot be found till we are emptied of everything else and have taken our hearts like an empty vessel to Him to be filled. If we took time to think about His gifts long enough, we would become so conscious of our need that prayer would become inevitable. We would ask of Him and He would give us what above all things He is waiting to give—Himself.

*

THE QUIET HOUR

Here is a passage of wise and gracious counsel by Sister Eva of Friedenshort as to the best way to spend the time we set aside for prayer, from The True Meaning of Life.

Do not these words sound like music from a higher world? Thousands of people know no quiet hour—life to them is one flowing stream of restless labour, of rush and anxiety, of tumult and breathless distraction. They are never still. Even when they lie down at night, they find

no rest, for sleep often eludes them for hours, only to come at last accompanied by dreams which fill the hours of the night with perplexity and anxiety, as actualities have done the day. The Scripture saith truly: "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and is full of trouble" (Job xiv. 1).

Quietness requires grace. Only the heart that has experienced the free grace of God can say: "My soul waiteth only upon God." Emancipation from this inner disquietude with its inevitable outward restlessness can only come through the holy disquietude of repentance. Repentance leads us to the Cross of Redemption, to the open arms of the Father God. There is peace—it is there our hunted souls find rest.

This first great quiet hour of Grace is but a beginning. The new-created life within the child of God stands in as great need of nourishment as the natural life of the body does; and the quiet hour is vitally important, because it is then we receive the Bread of Life. Whether the time we set aside for quiet should be a full hour of sixty minutes, or a shorter period, will depend partly upon circumstances, and still more upon our inward sense of need. But it is absolutely essential to spiritual growth that some time should be set apart every day in which the soul may enter the Holy of Holies. It is at such times that, in response to our asking, seeking and knocking, the door opens, and the invisible though ever present Lord grants us to meet with Him. The want of time spent thus in quiet meditation, drawing fresh supplies from the well of Life, often accounts for spiritual powerlessness and stunted growth. I remember speaking to a gathering of forty young girls, belonging to various Christian Associations, and all professed themselves to be children of God. I asked them whether they had ever spent a whole hour in quiet, alone with God, and only one could say that she had done so. We know from much experience that the enemy does

his utmost to prevent us from having a quiet hour. He is only too well aware of its importance in a healthy believer's life, and knows what wealth of overcoming power lies hidden for us there. Public worship, Bible-study circles, meetings, prayer meetings are all good, and we should attend them whenever possible, but they can never take the place of the quiet hour. Moreover, our Lord Himself ordained these times of stillness when He said: "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly" (Matt. vi. 6). The Lord does not state explicitly what length of time we should spend in secret, but it is clear that He meant private prayer to be practised in perfect seclusion and inner concentration. In a few hurried minutes this is impossible, we need time to wait in silence before God, and to speak with Him. If we need further proof of the import of this thing, we have our Lord's own silent watches on the mountain, in the early morning hours or in the quiet of night, to convince us. If He, the Son of God, felt the need of solitude, He who was never disturbed, never influenced by His surroundings, how much more do we need such times of quiet alone with God!

When and where we spend our quiet hour must depend upon circumstances, but the first hour in the day, before breakfast if possible, is without question the best. The many claims and diversions of daily life with its varying occupations and human contacts have not begun to fill our minds, we are more receptive and more responsive to the Lord's dealings with us; and we can set out upon the day's duties very differently equipped when we have first had a personal meeting with God. The early morning is greatly to be recommended for normally healthy people, even at the price of curtailed sleep. Experience has taught that the cost is not too great, very much the reverse!

Some, however, are obliged to begin work as early as six o'clock or even before; they must often content themselves with the reading of a promise and a brief prayer, and find some time for quiet later in the day. The old adage, "Where there's a will there's a way," will be found to apply in cases of this kind, and if there is a genuine desire for this necessary quiet, it will nearly always be possible to find some time in the course of the day. If not, it must be the evening hour, and no human consideration or personal inclination should be allowed to stand as a hindrance.

The place we choose will also vary according to circumstances. The privileged people who have rooms of their own find an easy solution to the problem, but very often a bedroom has to be shared. When this is so, some little room in the house should be kept as a quiet room, so that the different members of the household can go there for solitude at different times, or, if necessary, at the same time. Even this is sometimes impossible, and true children of God of all times, in all parts of the world, have manifested a wonderful ingenuity in finding places in which to be alone with Him. It may have been a garret, or a cellar, a barn, a garden seat, or some spot in a wood or a meadow, or some who had no quiet for prayer at home have found sanctuary in an unlocked church. Indeed, the blessings of the quiet hour have very often been profoundest when they have been sought and won at the cost of great self-denial.

It is vitally important that we make right use of our quiet hour. It must be sacred, an hour when we faithfully keep tryst in conscious realization of our responsibility before God and men. When I was travelling last, I met an old Christian gentleman whose eyes were alight with the peace of God. He seemed as though he were living in God's immediate presence with never a shade between. He told me that a friend had once given him a

word of counsel, which he had since followed: always to spend the first ten to fifteen minutes of his quiet hour in silent waiting and adoration before God, and then to present his requests and supplications. I would like to emphasize the value of that counsel and to recommend the practice of starting with silent worship. There must, of course, be full personal liberty in the use of the quiet hour. Some begin with prayer, and then go on to read and ponder the Word of God, and others prefer to begin with reading. Such questions must be decided according to the requirements of each individual soul. As much time as possible must be given to worship, thanksgiving, and praise. We should let our minds dwell upon the glory of God the Father as it is manifested in creation, in His gracious dealings with man, and in the manifold gifts of His love; but it is His essential greatness and glory, His divine majesty, which should provide our chief subject of meditation, and call forth our worship. The Father's gift in the Son, the sending forth of the Holy Spirit, the whole work of atonement and redemption give us fathomless themes for adoring praise. Then we come to the prayer of petition, when we can approach the Father in the Name of Jesus with childlike joy and confidence, and lay our requests before Him.

The fashion in which we pray is again an individual matter. Some start with their personal needs, and then their petitions spread out over a widening circle—their relatives, the members of their household, their fellow believers, finally reaching out to the farthest posts of the mission fields on the earth. Others present the vast needs of the Kingdom of God first, and then draw in the circle of their prayer till they come to their own individual burdens. Many find refreshment and renewal through a certain variation in the practice of prayer, and to others it is more helpful to follow some well-proved method faithfully day by day. A notebook can be a real means of

grace as the sphere of our prayer life widens. We may record there the names of those specially committed to us for intercession, and keep a column for making note of answers and fulfilment. How often my faith has been quickened as I have turned the leaves of some old notebook, and found whole pages of answered prayers. It is a source of strength in hours of temptation, of spiritual weariness or severe trial. Moreover, anything that promotes order, regularity and faithfulness in putting into execution what we have resolved in the domain of prayer is of untold value. Our joy will be greatly increased and our faith strengthened by the ever renewed experience of divine response to our petitions.

We must come to God in full consciousness of our own poverty, helplessness and lowliness. We must lay bare every spot and stain, every least unfaithfulness, every sin, in the light of His holiness; and then His forgiving grace cleanses by the power of the shed blood. There must be no shadow between the praying soul and God the All-holy, and there must be no barrier raised by dissension, coldness or resentment, to separate us from our neighbour.

A due portion of our quiet hour should be spent in reading the Word of God. It may be helpful and stimulating to follow a plan for systematic Bible-study, but any who have a sincere desire to study the Scriptures aright will experience the guidance and counsel of the Holy Spirit. We may make it our object to read through the whole Bible every year, or we may spend a longer time studying separate chapters or books of the Bible, so as to allow the Word to penetrate thoroughly into our hearts and be transformed into life-giving energy. Each must judge for himself what best meets his need. Many holy men of God have found blessing and food for their souls, and power for life and service, as they have read right through the Scriptures within a short period. Others again have stilled their hunger by giving themselves to

prolonged, deep meditation of shorter passages in the Word. From personal experience I am convinced that thorough reading and assimilation of the Word of God is of infinitely greater value than a superficial picking here and there, or a haphazard turning up of single verses. Genuine hard work at conquering difficult passages always brings its reward in fruit and blessing. The one great essential is always that we should, whenever possible, find some practical expression in our lives for that which we have read, so that we become doers of the word, and not hearers (or speakers) only. The Scripture revelation of the will of God must be the plumb-line of our actions, and the guiding star of our lives. Every question, great or small, must be settled in the light of the Word of God, and every circumstance of our lives find its interpretation there.

When time allows, it may be helpful to read a good devotional book, or one that is a guide to Bible-study, as well as the Bible. And the biographies of sanctified men and women can open to us veritable mines of treasure, and be the means of communicating new courage and strength to our souls.

It is an indisputable fact that those who have lived the busiest lives have often been most faithful in keeping tryst with God. Men like Hudson Taylor, General Gordon, August Hermann Francke, George Müller, and many, many another, found time for prayer in the midst of an extraordinary amount of activity, whereas all too frequently those who have far more time at their disposal allow it to be filled by non-essential, secondary things, so that they do not find time for quiet with God. The most glorious fruit that these hours of stillness bring forth is the practice they engender of continual abiding in the presence of God. We learn in those times of secret communion how to live a life of unceasing prayer throughout all the other hours of our day with their manifold occupations.

There are times when, however deep and true the longing after solitude with God may be, circumstances make it impossible. At times like that, the sincere heart may find comfort in the experience of a saint of long ago, of whom Tersteegan writes under the name "Armelle the Good." She was a farmer's servant, and from dawn till dark she scarce had leisure to pray a single Pater Noster through; but God gave her the great grace of being able to abide in unceasing prayer, so that everything she did was, so to speak, drenched in prayer, converted into prayer. Certainly so wonderful a grace is only given to those who have made use of every possible opportunity, and can never be made a plea either to justify or to excuse carelessness and disorder in the exercises of our spiritual life. Though I have to look back upon many omissions, faults, failures and sins in my own life, there is no sphere where I have greater cause for repentance than in this of the quiet hour. And yet, on the other hand, I can bear witness that almost all the grace I have experienced, and the manifold blessings I have received, have come to me bound up in some way with the blessings of quietness. What manner of lives would our lives be, what manner of lives may they yet become, if we did but understand how to use aright this privilege of grace!

And so, in closing, just a few more precepts:

Face thyself with unqualified honesty, and stand in the full light of God.

Do not allow any known sin in thy life.

Yield thy will to God in full obedience and unconditional surrender.

Be at peace with all men.

Love all men, even thine enemy.

Forgive and be forgiven. Do not keep any bitterness or resentment hidden in thy heart.

Withdraw thyself from all that distracts, resign what-

ever is a hindrance to thee and unfits thee to meet with God and to do His will.

The more faithfully thou dost practise the quiet hour, the dearer and more indispensable will it become to thee, and the greater will be the blessing welling up in thy life.

And may He who has said, "Without me ye can do nothing," grant us the help and guidance of His Holy Spirit in this our sacred ministry in holy hours, for the sake of the glory of His Name.



AT WHAT PERIOD IN THE DAY?

*We have said it is impossible to lay down hard and fast rules about times. Some people find it difficult to make the early morning the major time for prayer. Providing the difficulty is not due to indolence or slackness, such people will be wise to find other periods in the day when their communion can be made more effectively. In this passage from his book *The Christian Man*, Canon Peter Green, whilst stressing the need for regularity in prayer, suggests times other than the early morning when it may be possible for us to commune with God.*

Nothing is more true than the familiar saying that what can be done at any time is often not done at all. It is, therefore, important to have fixed times for prayer. Men sometimes say that in a busy commercial life, with the rush and pressure of modern business, they have little time for prayer. They may well be invited to consider the answer which a famous Cambridge mathematical coach used to make to any pupil who said he had had no time to do the work set him at the last lecture. "Young man! you have had all the time there is." Exactly. We all have

twenty-four hours in each day and none of us has any more. The things we shall find time for are the things we value most, and the things we have no time for will be the things we deem less important. If day after day you find that your prayers are being crowded out by other interests one of two things is certain; either you are not really in earnest about saying them, or you have chosen an inconvenient time. For different times suit different people. Let us consider this.

I am sure that every day should begin and end with prayer. That is to say, a man should pray when he gets up and when he goes to bed. It is saying *Good morning* and *Good night* to our Heavenly Father. But, as I said of the clergy¹ so I say now of the laity, there may well be more convenient times for the bulk of a man's prayers than either early morning or late night. Here are a few examples. Many years ago a Manchester business man, a keen, hard-headed man, prominent in business, and also in municipal politics, and a loyal churchman, surprised me by saying, of a certain church in a Midland town, that it was open all day. When I questioned him he said that there was no town in England into which he went on business in which he did not know at least one church which was always open, and he went on to say that he often had to catch a very early train, and there was not much use calling on business men during the dinner hour, so when in a strange town he usually got his own lunch and then spent a quiet half-hour or forty minutes in church. I know he said his morning and evening prayers, but they were often brief. His time of quiet, uninterrupted prayer, and of intercession for others, was in the middle of the day, either in his own office, when he told the office-boy he did not wish to be disturbed, or in a church, when away from home. Some years after, when he was passing through a time of great trouble and anxiety, I had striking

¹ *The Man of God*, Hodder & Stoughton, 1935, p. 65.

proof of the place prayer took in his life. And I know a business woman, holding a rather important post, who, owing to family circumstances, has many duties at home. But she gets an hour for dinner and has it always in town, and the bulk of her prayers are said in a church near her office.

I am not saying that such times for prayer are better than early morning or just before going to bed. For most people I believe the time of quiet with God in the early morning is of infinite value. But every man should choose a time which suits him, when he can be reasonably sure of being unhurried and uninterrupted.

We said that our intercourse with God must include all things called for by the relation of man to God. What are those things? Clearly they are (i) Worship or Adoration; (ii) Confession, which should include not only looking back and owning what has been wrong, but looking forward to see what difficulties and temptations lie ahead, and to pray for help to meet them; (iii) Prayer, for oneself, for all our bodily, mental and spiritual need; (iv) Intercession, which should include prayer for those for whom a man prays every day, and also prayer for the special subject allotted to the day; and (v) Thanksgiving, which should be closely associated with the day's Intercessions so that we fulfil the command of the Apostle, when he says "In everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God."¹ Prayer will gain in value and in helpfulness in proportion as adoration and thanksgiving take a larger part in it. There should also be times of silence; silence at the beginning till we feel ourselves in the presence of God; times of silence during prayer, especially when our thoughts have wandered, so as to recapture this sense of His presence; and times of silence when we rest in His

¹ Phil. iv. 6.

nearness and love—as the psalmist says, “Be still then, and know that I am God”¹—when we listen for His reply. A layman from whom I have learned much said to me, some years ago when he was about thirty, “Sometimes when I am praying I feel as if God were just there”—and he pointed to an electric light a yard or two in front of, and above him—“but I don’t always feel like that, though I want to.”

On the subject of books of prayer there is much difference of opinion. Personally I feel that a “read” prayer is never quite satisfactory. On the other hand, many people, left with no external helps, find themselves tongue-tied. The mere fact that there is a book before them, to which they can turn if they wish, gives them confidence. I think we can gather a hint from musicians. Any great pianist will tell you how difficult he finds it to throw himself into a piece of music, and express himself in and through it, if he is reading it from the notes. To make it all his own he must learn it by heart. So I have found great help from the use of lovely prayers, collects and hymns learned by heart. The best prayer-book is the one a man draws up for himself.² And if he is constantly discarding old prayers and gathering new ones he will soon

“prove the power of prayer
To strengthen faith and sweeten care.”

—COWPER.

One thing needs saying. No business man would stand up to speak at an important meeting without knowing beforehand what he was going to speak about. Yet I fear that people often kneel to pray with little idea what they mean to speak to God about. And then they wonder that they make a poor business of prayer, and find it a worry and tedium instead of a joy and refreshment. The man

¹ Psalm xlv. 10.

² See my *Progress in Prayer*, S.P.C.K., 1935.

who wants to make prayer what it may be, the best thing in life, should keep a small notebook and put down, as he meets with them, the names of the persons, causes and subjects he means to pray for. If then he has certain days for each subject he will find that he always has things to speak to God about; more things in fact than he can find time for. And the more freely he speaks the greater is the help of prayer. There is a verse from one of John Newton's hymns so apt on this point that I must quote it again, though I have used it before in print. It runs:

“With Him sweet converse I maintain;
Great as He is, I dare be free;
I tell Him all my grief and pain;
And He reveals His love to me.”

If anyone asks what subjects are suitable for prayer, the answer is *All subjects*. That which cannot find a place in your prayers should not find a place in your life or thoughts. The object of prayer is to bring the whole of life under God's direction and influence. And here I would stress a point which I owe to the late Dr. Gore. Merely to mention a person's name in prayer, without putting up any special petition for him, is not wasted time. A schoolmaster, let us say, might have special things to pray about for some boys in his form. But he will do well to name them all by name, one by one, thinking of each, wishing him well, and presenting him, as it were, before God.

One last word on this subject. No two men are exactly alike. Human nature is infinitely various. Hence the same prayers and the same methods of prayer will not suit all men. Make experiments in prayer. Find out what helps you. And be always trying to pray better and with more power and joy.

FINDING THE BEST PLACE

As Jesus retired to the hill-side when He sought communion with His Father, so C. F. Andrews has found that the best way to realize God's presence is in the open air. He offers an alternative suggestion for those living under town conditions, and gives counsel about quietness and leisureliness and regularity in prayer. This is taken from Christ in the Silence.

These chapters will have been written in vain if we are content merely to remain in the atmosphere of emotional thoughts without attempting to put their principles into practice.

Our Lord Jesus Christ condemned, in the Pharisees, the self-delusion involved in sentimental acceptance of the formal duties of life without fulfilling those higher moral principles which God had commanded. His own test was always, "By their fruits ye shall know them." This leads directly to the question: "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?"

When the issue is thus faced, with regard to our inner life in Christ and our realization of His presence, we are brought up against the hard facts of everyday experience in our own times, and the great difficulty under modern conditions of maintaining faithfully the daily practice of fervent, heart-felt prayer. For on the reality of this prayer life the presence of Christ within the heart depends.

In this postscript, I propose to give certain suggestions of a simple character with regard to the practice of prayer. What is here set down will be in the form of headings to be worked out in practical life according to individual circumstances. Conditions differ so much that no literal application of them is likely to be of much use. In this

respect, as in other matters, it is true that "The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life."

(1) By far the greatest need in the prayer life of to-day is to rescue the morning hour for silent communion with God. There may be exceptional hindrances to this, in individual lives, which cannot possibly be overcome and therefore require adjustment. In such instances some other way must be found for meeting this daily need of prayer. But in the normal life to-day difficulties should be removed and obstacles avoided which interrupt this quiet time before the active work of the day begins.

The warning must be given, in a parenthesis, that it is no solution of this problem for anyone to curtail sleep beyond what health requires in order to rise early for prayer. It is impossible without injury thus to "burn the candle at both ends." The real test of self-discipline and moral courage is to be firm about retiring to rest. For in many instances it is far harder to retire to bed early than to get up betimes in the morning, especially when late habits have already been formed.

One of the most beautiful characters I have known, an aged Mussulman named Munshi Zaka Ullah of Delhi, had been so self-disciplined in this respect that, though he was the most friendly and sociable of men, he would make it known beforehand at any evening gathering that he would be obliged to retire at a certain hour. He would never miss for a single day his morning communion with God in prayer. He rose each day before the dawn.

As a Christian I have often been put to shame by his life of consecration. Our Lord Jesus Christ has said, "For their sakes I consecrate myself, that they also may be truly consecrated." In the light of the supreme consecration of the Cross it ought to be practical for us so to rule our lives as to devote one morning hour to Him.

"Let each man," said the Apostle Paul, "be fully persuaded in his own mind." Nothing is farther from my

thoughts than any attempt to lay down rules. There must always be difficulties under such artificial conditions as those which exist to-day, and no rule can cover them all. But the healthy and natural way of life is surely to rise with the dawn; and the greater number of difficulties will give way if only we endeavour to do so.

(2) Let us assume, therefore, that we have made up our minds to keep faithfully the morning hour. We are earnestly seeking to hear the voice of our Good Shepherd as He calls us by name and leads us forth for the day's work. How then shall we act in such a way as to succeed best in what we undertake?

One vital factor in such "seeking and finding" is solitude. All the day long we are likely to be occupied with persons and things. The world will be with us "late and soon." Therefore let us keep this first hour of the day, not in company but in silence with Him. To some the most solitary place may be some spot in their own home. In my own life I have found that the greatest of all aids to solitude has been to go out into the open air and remain walking up and down in some quiet place, thus seeking to realize God's presence.¹ In the country this is easy to do, but in the town there are difficulties to be encountered. These, however, can be partly overcome if we make up our minds to win through. Sometimes even to sit at an open window, where one can see the sky, may be a help.

Each one of us has to find out by experience what is the most helpful means of keeping a quiet time and then to fashion his own life accordingly. I know from personal experience the great hardships which exist in the crowded houses of poor people, and among them it is hardest of all to find a way to silence and solitude. We may be quite certain that where these difficulties are insurmountable

¹ Thoreau writes: "It is always as if I met some grand, serene, immortal, infinitely encouraging, though invisible companion, and walked with Him."

God helps by other means those who earnestly seek Him.

(3) Recollection throughout the day is one of the best means of keeping up that silent "prayer within the heart" which is essential for the full growth of the spiritual life.

There needs to be practised constantly, in simple ways, a mental withdrawal from outward things for a few brief moments. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty."¹ The opening words of the Lord's Prayer said mentally have been a great help to me in this direction. There is a poem from *Gitanjali* whose first verses have been a personal aid towards keeping my heart true and pure. It begins, "Life of my Life!" There is also the joyous method of taking some word of Christ, such as "I am the Good Shepherd," or "I am the True Vine," in the early morning, during the quiet hour for meditation, and then brooding over it again and again throughout the day. But this method will be brought forward more fully under the next heading.

There is a very noble passage in a prayer, in *Gitanjali*, "Give me the strength to raise my mind high above daily trifles." It is the same thought that is contained in the words of the Apostle, "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth: for ye are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God."²

When Bishop Lightfoot was near to his death his chaplain asked him what he was engaged in at the moment. He said, "I am feeding on a few great thoughts."

Perhaps the best of all inner recollections is to remember someone who deeply needs our prayers owing to suffering or sorrow or temptation. It is always the unselfish thought that drives out self.

This temper of the recollected mind cannot be learnt

¹ Ps. xci. 1.

² Col. iii. 2.

quickly: but when it has become, by constant practice, almost a second nature, it gives balance to the whole character. It makes the daily life one continuous act of prayer. It helps also to give that inner guidance from God in the smallest details, as our thoughts instinctively rise to Him seeking an answer. It keeps the peace of Christ in our hearts.

Here, I am sure, the East has much to teach us in the West. Sadhu Sundar Singh, as a Christian saint, had this gift of silent withdrawal from the world to quite an exceptional degree. Everyone who met him in the West noticed this. Ordinary people who saw him said how wonderfully Christlike his face was. His serenity on all occasions came from the practice of inward prayer and constant retirement from the world.

It is strange to me to notice how little at present we realize in the West that we are in danger of actually losing this faculty of recollectedness and serene quietude, owing to the crowding up of our time with unnecessary things. That impressive phrase of the Book of Genesis, "He walked with God," implies the constant withdrawal into the realm of the Spirit where the Father has His worshippers.

(4) Great central thoughts, which may be remembered day by day, are of the highest practical value for the recollected mind. These farewell chapters of St. John's Gospel have been like a treasure-house to me in my own life. Matthew Arnold's sonnet, called "East London," expresses what they mean:

"I met a preacher there I knew and said:

'Ill and o'erworked, how fare you in this scene?'

'Bravely,' he said, 'for I of late have been

Much cheered with thoughts of Christ, the Living
Bread.'"

(5) In the evening, before retiring to rest, the mind and

body are tired. While in the freshness of the early morning, after sleep is over, the heart of man longs to praise and worship God for all His goodness and mercy and loving-kindness, in the same way at night we are likely to feel most of all our mortal weakness, our failures and sins; and as we feel their burden most, we shall also realize the need of the divine love and forgiveness. We shall not forget to thank Him also.

Our evening prayers, therefore, are likely to be more of the character of confession and thankful, humble dependence upon God's mercy. While there will often be difficult times when anxiety for those we love, or other causes, may prolong our intercessions, yet normally we shall retire to rest after a brief period of prayer, with the expectation of rising early on the morrow to glorify His name.

(6) It is becoming clear that Sunday in each week, as a day of rest and refreshment, wherein our souls may be renewed and our spirits strengthened, is losing much of its power. It needs, with most of us, remodelling afresh in the light of Christ's words, "The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath." The Christian Church, at the first, adopted the old Hebrew principle of an interval of rest each week, while changing the day of the week from Saturday to Sunday. We have to work out the whole problem afresh as to the *method* by which we may obtain that vital spiritual rest which the soul of man requires. This principle of a day of rest needs more than ever to be emphasized in these crowded times. But the old legal idea of the Sabbath has gone, never to return.

(7) When prayer thus envelops the whole life, it will become a creative, energizing power. It will "give life" to others for whom we pray.¹ The virtue will go out from us in healing and blessing.² The words of the Epistle of

¹ 1 John v. 16.

² St. Luke viii. 46.

St. James will be found true, where he says, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."¹

(8) While the daily life of prayer is likely to go on quietly, with its silent advance and ever deepening consciousness of Christ's presence, there will also come great moments of luminous realization. We shall see Christ clearly and plainly, and our hearts will rejoice, and our joy no man can take from us. It may happen that for a long time we shall have no open vision. But then at last, as Wordsworth tells us in the "Excursion":

"a step,
A single step, that freed me from the skirts
Of the blind vapour, opened to my view
Glory, beyond all glory ever seen
By waking sense, or by the dreaming soul."

Just as in Nature there are slow and silent adjustments going on all the while, so it is with the Christian life. These silent processes are moulding us gradually. But then, as in Nature also, on one day there comes a sudden and almost miraculous leap forward. One of the greatest blessings of the Oxford Group Movement has been to bring out into the full light of day these upward movements of the spirit. Men and women, of fine, earnest character, have been "freed from the skirts of the blind vapour" which had enveloped them; and then there has been opened up to their view "glory beyond all glory ever seen." I have known personally many such, and it is a joy that cannot be expressed to watch the new creative life of the spirit surging within them and expressing itself in action.

(9) As we continue the daily practice of prayer, there will be evident more and more clearly in our lives the guiding hand of God. I cannot possibly speak about "guidance" with any fullness here, but I would call atten-

¹ St. James v. 16.

tion to a remarkable book by Dr. Rendel Harris,¹ which has passed through many editions. This divine guidance is undoubtedly promised to those who ask in Christ's name, but Christ's promise is dependent on abiding in Him and fulfilling His commandment of love.

As I close these notes, with a fervent prayer that they may be of service, I would return to the one supreme thought of Christ Himself, the Lord and the Master, who stoops down in His great humility to wash our feet, and speaks in the silence of the upper room His parting words to our doubting and troubled hearts.

"A new commandment I give unto you," He says to us. "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." "In my Father's house are many mansions: I go to prepare a place for you." "Ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." "I am the true Vine and ye are the branches." "Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends." "Ye are my friends." "Peace I leave with you." "For their sakes I consecrate myself."

Age after age, Christ has taken these words of the Evangelist and brought peace and joy through them to troubled hearts. The more we use them in our quiet hour of communion, the more they come home to us; and as they enter into our lives they transform them into His likeness.

For Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day and for ever. His Holy Spirit is the Comforter—the Strengtheners of our spirits, the Revealer of all the truth, the Lord and Giver of life; and through His Spirit Christ Himself will be with us in our daily struggles to overcome manifold temptations.

¹ *The Guiding Hand of God*, by J. Rendel Harris (Thomas Law).

CHAPTER ELEVEN

METHOD IN PRAYER

WE have already considered the advantages of being methodical in observing times for prayer, but what of the prayer itself? Ought we to observe some regular order in the form of our prayers? There are doubtless exceptions to every rule, but for the overwhelming number of people if prayer is to become anything more than a perfunctory exercise, such orderliness is not only advantageous but necessary. People are apt to talk somewhat superficially about the value of spontaneity in prayer, but spontaneity quickly settles into habit, and unless we take the trouble to train ourselves in good habits of prayer, we shall be liable to fall into bad habits, as in everything else. Of course habit must be our servant not our master. The obvious danger of forms of prayer is that they settle into formalism, or else we become so absorbed in studying methods of prayer and in making preparation for prayer that we forget that it is an intimately personal thing—the communion of spirit with Spirit. But even in communion with our earthly friends we observe some sort of order, usually beginning with a pledge of our friendship, whether it be a handshake or a kiss. Such a pledge of our filial relationship to God as a beginning to our prayer, Jesus suggested when He told His disciples to pray “Our Father.” The minimum of preparation for our prayer should be a period of silence and then some loving invocation that lifts our thought above our own need or failure to the infinite goodness and measureless resources of God. And God’s goodness becomes most vivid to us when we recall the endless benefits of life. Thus St. Paul said, “Let your requests be made known unto God with thanksgiving. . . .”

There is, however, abundant matter about form and

order in the chapter which follows. Let us remember in studying it that method is the servant of freedom. That man is not most free who is the slave of every caprice, but he who has trained himself in good habits; although it is doubtless true also that we have to control habit lest it should become a tyranny. But prayer—it cannot be too often stressed—is communion with God. It is not like a set of dumb-bell exercises from which we get as much return and no more than the energy we put into them. The greater gifts come from God Himself, and if our prayer is sincere we can leave its progressive enlargement to God.

One other note may be added here since no discussion of it appears in the pages that follow. What bodily posture should we adopt in prayer? Kneeling is the most common, and as it is the traditional attitude for prayer, most of us adopt it without further consideration. Needless to say, we should not adopt it if we are suffering from some physical disability that renders it painful, nor must we think of it as the only, nor necessarily the best, bodily posture for us when we are well. In an earlier chapter C. F. Andrews confessed to finding it easier to commune with God walking about in some secluded spot. Some people have found it best to relax in a chair, or even on a couch. Providing such relaxation does not pass into mere lounging indolence, there is no reason at all why we should not employ it. One man told William Adams Brown that he spent the time in his daily train-journey praying for the people whom he faced in the carriage, and we ourselves were told by a business man that he spent the time walking from the station across London Bridge to his office in asking God to help him in his contacts with his staff, and them in their association with one another. We need to have a sense of the adventurous in our prayer—to remember we can make discoveries for ourselves, and not be afraid to experiment. In all such questions as posture, and such visual aids as the Cross, we must find what is best in our particular case. And as in every other case, method is to be our guide, but not our chain.

THE NATURAL ORDER OF THOUGHT

We will begin with a very simple scheme of prayer suggested by Canon Peter Green in his book The Profession of a Christian.

We must learn to pray, and we must pray in the right way. And a good starting-point in learning to pray is supplied by our Lord's words: "When ye pray, say Our Father" (Luke xi. 2). People think that this means that whenever we pray we must say the Lord's Prayer. I cannot imagine anyone praying, either publicly or in private, without using the Lord's Prayer. But that is not what Jesus meant. He meant that when we think of God we must always think of Him as a loving Father, and when we draw near to Him in prayer we must do so with the glad, happy confidence of a child speaking to a father who loves him. It is wonderful how this way of thinking about prayer solves all difficulties connected with it. I could fill a volume with examples, but I will leave you to think them out for yourself. But just one example I will give. Recently a man of science said that it was presumptuous to suppose that our prayers would alter what God had planned. Would the head of a great business, he asked, alter his decisions because of what the junior clerk said? But he was all wrong. God is not the head of a business, and you are not His office boy or junior typist. He is your loving Father and you are His dear child. So, when you pray, always feel sure that He loves you and longs to bless you and delights to listen.

The next thing to be said about prayer is that we must not be in a hurry to begin. When you kneel down, wait till your heart and mind are quiet and still. Wait till you feel yourself in God's presence. I once heard Dr. Temple, the Archbishop of York, say that if you only have a

minute for prayer, it is worth while to spend half a minute in silence waiting upon God. This is what the Psalmist means when he says, "Be still then, and know that I am God." And if you find your thoughts wandering during prayer, do not worry. Just "be still and know that He is God" for a minute or two, and then go on from the point where you left off.

The next thing we have to ask is: "What shall I say when I pray?" I dare say you could make quite a good speech at a debating society on any subject you were interested in. But I am sure you would not stand up quite unprepared and expect to say anything worth hearing. Yet many people kneel down, and then are discouraged because all sorts of fine things do not spring readily to their lips. You must prepare what you mean to say to your heavenly Father not less but more carefully than you would prepare what you mean to say to fellow members of your debating society. Now I have nothing to say against books of prayer. They can be a great help to us when we are learning to pray. But this I do say. No one who depends on books of prayer will ever learn to pray with power and with joy. The best prayer book is one you make for yourself. Why not try this plan? Buy a small notebook, not too big to carry in your pocket, but not too small. Then draw up for yourself a *form of prayer*. When I say draw it up for yourself I mean what I say. So I do not want to give you too many hints. I want it to be really your own. And if you try a form and go on altering it, and adding to it, and dropping parts that do not seem helpful, you will end by getting a form which just suits you, and that will be better than anything I could work out for you. But here are just a few hints. It should have:

(i) *An Introduction*

This may be some sentence, often varied, such as "In

the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," or, "Come, Holy Ghost, and fill my heart, and kindle in me the fire of love" or, "Lord, teach me to pray." And then the Lord's Prayer, said slowly, and perhaps a favourite collect or a few verses of a hymn.

(ii) *Confession of Sin and Prayer for forgiveness and help*

This involves looking back to see where you have failed, and confessing it to God and praying for forgiveness. But it also involves looking ahead, and seeing where we are likely to be tempted, and asking for God's help. We often fail because temptation comes on us suddenly. Jesus fought His great battle at long range, so to speak, in the Garden of Gethsemane. There, before His foes were upon Him, before the pain and shame and hurry of the trial and crucifixion were actually present, He fought His battle and won in the power of prayer. After that He walks through the midst of His foes the only calm, undisturbed, victorious man of them all. So in prayer spend a little time looking back and confessing and looking ahead and asking for help. And let both be done in your own words, simply and naturally.

(iii) *Prayer for all you need*

Speak to God about everything in your life. He is your heavenly Father and loves to hear you. If there is anything which you feel you could not possibly pray about, it must be wrong. There should be nothing in your life which is not in your prayers.

(iv) *Prayer for others*

There is hardly anything which brings such a blessing as prayer for others. But if you really use it fully you will find so many things to pray about that you won't have time for them all every day. So it is a very good thing to head the blank pages at the end of your notebook Sunday,

Monday, Tuesday, etc. Then write down on each the subjects for that day. Sunday may be for things connected with your church; the Bishop who confirmed you, your clergy, the Sunday School, etc. Monday may be for relations not prayed for every day and for friends. Tuesday may be for foreign missions, Wednesday for the sick, Thursday for your work, at school or at business, and for the people it brings you into touch with; Friday for sinners, Saturday for special topics which don't quite fit into any of the other classes. And you will be always on the look out for fresh things to pray about, and also, if you are wise, you will constantly cross off things which seem to be getting stale, and which you have prayed for long enough. I could fill a book many times the size of this with examples of the blessing this method of prayer brings. But take this case. Mary says to Maud: "You look wretched. What is the matter?" Maud says: "I'm worrying about mother. She is ill, and the doctor is afraid it may be cancer." If Mary does not pray, all she will do is to say: "Oh, cheer up. It may not be so bad after all." And then she will forget. If she loves prayer she will think, "I must put the name of Maud's mother on my prayer list for Wednesday." Then, even if it is a month before she sees Maud again, she will say, when she does see her, "How is your mother? I do hope she is better." And Maud will go home to her mother and say: "I had no idea Mary was so fond of me. She asked after you at once, and when I told her you were better, and the doctor was sure it was not cancer, she seemed as pleased as if I had given her a present." Do not think this is a little thing. It is the sort of thing that makes life sweet and beautiful. So learn to pray for others and constantly enlarge your circle of prayer:

"For so the whole wide world is every way
Bound with gold chains about the feet of God."

(v) *Thanksgiving*

If you pray much you will want to offer thanksgiving too. And there is nothing that helps us more than to thank God for His gifts. The old hymn is right when it says:

“Count your blessings, name them one by one,
And it will surprise you what the Lord hath done.”

A lady once told me that she was feeling so cold and dull that she did not feel as if she wanted to pray. “All right,” I said, “then don’t pray. Give prayers a rest for a fortnight!” She looked very much shocked and said: “I’m sure you don’t mean that.” “Yes I do,” I said. “Give your prayers a rest and for a fortnight do nothing but thank God for all His mercies. At the end your heart will so glow with love for God you will have no difficulty in praying.” So let thanksgiving have a great place in your prayers. And thank God not only for the blessings of the day. Every now and then go over all the blessings of life, parents, relations, friends, teachers, health, knowledge, beauty, the simple pleasures of daily life, etc.

(vi) *Adoration and Worship*

This sounds difficult, but it is not, and it should find a place in all prayer. Sometimes, in private prayer, I say the *Te Deum* or a hymn like “My God how wonderful Thou art.” But wordless worship can be wonderfully helpful.

(vii) *Some form of ending*

You may end with the “Grace” or any other suitable form. But do not let a form become formal. Vary your method of ending from time to time.

I have spoken of using “a favourite collect, or a few verses of a hymn.” That is because, while anything read out of a book does not seem to help much, anything learned by heart helps enormously. Any great pianist will

tell you that it is hard to put much expression into music when you are reading from a score. If you want to make a thing your own you must play it by heart. So with prayer. There are favourite collects and hymns and verses of Scripture that I often use. I will not tell you what they are. Find out your own favourites.

I have spent a lot of time over prayer because it is so important. If you are growing in the power of prayer you must be doing well. If your prayers are bad you must be in danger. So go on trying. You will often fail. But forgive my quoting the old jingle:

“If at first you don’t succeed,
Try, try, try again.”

*

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS IN PRAYER

In this passage the Bishop of Croydon discusses preparation and orderliness in prayer, passing to the gain to our private prayers if we join in the corporate worship of the Church.

(i) Hurry (often coupled with worry) is the curse of modern life; and it is certainly, as an old saint once said, “the death of prayer.” No one can possibly pray, or learn to pray, in a hurry. There is a story of a young American who, on alighting from the train at Zermatt, pointed to the majestic Matterhorn and asked: “What’s the name of that big rock?” When told that it was one of the most famous summits in Europe, he replied: “Do you think I could get up there this afternoon?” There are no short cuts—nor, for that matter, funicular railways—up the mountain of the Lord. An experienced Christian once said that if you had only five minutes to spend in prayer, it would be well to spend three of them in preparation.

Such "preparation" for prayer may well in fact begin with the first waking thought. It is a well-known psychological fact that in the moments of semi-consciousness just after waking the mind is peculiarly "suggestible," and the subconsciousness accessible; and in those moments to think of God as beauty, as radiant joy, as creative power, can set the tone for the whole day. I know of a man who, unable in any other way to conquer his unruly temper, achieved victory by training himself to repeat habitually, on first waking: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."

"When first thy eyes unveil, give thy soul leave
To do the like; our bodies but forerun
The spirit's duty; true hearts spread and heave
Unto their God as flowers do to the sun.
Give Him thy first thoughts; then so shalt thou keep
Him company all day, and in Him sleep."¹

(ii) Then for the actual minutes set aside for praying—five, ten, fifteen, whatever the period may be. With heart prepared, and mind alert, and "shoes from off your feet" you are in the Presence: you are ready to "Pray." What is to happen first? Without question, let the first "act" be one of worship, praise, adoration, thanksgiving: "Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name."² Perhaps the essence of this act is to forget oneself altogether, and, so to speak, to "let oneself go" in a purely disinterested enjoyment of God. "To behold the fair beauty of the Lord"³: to do that and nothing else, for a few moments, is sheer spiritual delight. If words are needed, they can be found almost at random in any "praising" psalm; the Psalms are full to bursting with

¹ Henry Vaughan (1695), quoted in *Ways of Praying*, Lester, p. 16

² Psalms xxvii. 4. P.B. Version.

³ Psalms xcvi. 8.

such expressions of praise and thanksgiving. Moreover, in this connection, the *order* in the Lord's Prayer is highly significant. Our Lord tells us that when you come into the presence of God you should forget about yourself and your needs, even your sins, and fill your mind and soul with the thought of *GOD*: and you cannot think of Him without longing that His Name should be hallowed, His Kingship recognized, His purposes carried out throughout the whole world. And praise soon glides into thanksgiving. "Maintain your zest for prayer," says St. Paul, "by thanksgiving."¹

It has been said that the atheist's "bad moment" is when he wants to say "thank you" and has no one *to whom* to say "thank you." The Christian does not labour under that difficulty, but he has so much for which he wants to thank that he does find some difficulty in knowing where to begin. Most Christians, as they grow in spiritual experience, find themselves impelled to devote an increasing part of their times for prayer to praise and thanksgiving. Such a practice makes for health and happiness, spiritually, mentally, and even physically. "An old man was asked by a friend to explain the secret of his serene enjoyment of life, his knack of spreading happiness. At first he demurred, but at length, seeing his friend's eagerness, he confessed to a certain rule kept from his youth up. He had devoted an hour before breakfast each day solely to thanksgiving. He never allowed a thought of worry or a difficulty, a fault or a sin to turn his mind from the simple enjoyment of God's presence, from praising and thanking Him for His glorious works. It became a matter of habit with him, just as giving way to worry, a sense of inefficiency, or self-pity becomes a habit with others. That hour of concentration on all that was glorious, beautiful, and satisfying brought him so near to God that the glow of it lasted all day. The law of cause and effect

¹ Colossians iv. 2 (Moffatt).

is as reliable in the spiritual as in the physical realm."¹

(iii) Whatever else may find a place in the time set apart for prayer, it is important—indeed it is indispensable—that some moments should be completely given up to a *silent waiting upon God*. Not merely to praise which finds itself speechless, nor to aspiration and longing which reach out after God “with words that cannot be uttered”; but to a deliberate attempt to attune the mind to His mind, to listen in silence to anything which His Spirit may be seeking to say to the heart. “My soul, be thou silent unto God,” cried the Psalmist long ago;² and always, then and since, God’s servants have felt the need of such times of profound, wordless quiet in the Presence. Nothing is more effective in taking our thoughts away from ourselves and our own little affairs and enlarging them by fixing them on God. Some people find that it gives point and precision to such quiet if they take pencil and paper and write down whatever “message” they are conscious of receiving. That this may be a valuable method of seeking Divine guidance is unquestionable. But a certain caution is necessary, especially if a question arises of deciding between possible courses of action; and room must always be left for judgment and common sense as well as the (subsequent) advice of others. It is all too easy to mistake quite earthly promptings for the voice of God; and the stale contents of one’s own consciousness are no substitute for a fresh receiving of His light and life. Also it is possible for the silence to decline into mere mental emptiness or profitless, wandering thoughts. Nevertheless, such obstacles can always be overcome by due thought and discipline, and the fruits of silence enjoyed, in growing measure, by the praying soul.

Many find it a help to fix the thought on some phrase or verse from Scripture, or on an incident in the life of

¹ *Ways of Praying*, Lester, pp. 19-20.

² Psalms lxii. 1. Revised Version.

Our Lord; or even to fit in, at this point, the daily Bible study and let the little period of silence immediately follow the Bible reading. An apt description, in verse, of what the silence may mean will be found in Father Andrew's *The Adventure of Prayer*: I am allowed to quote the verses here:

“I come to Thee, great King, a humble suppliant,
And bow me low beneath Thy mercy seat,
And ask Thee for the grace of perfect silence;
For me of all men this the prayer most meet.

So would I worship Thee in utter reverence,
Nor say one word, nor lift mine eyes to Thee,
But wrap me in the mantle of my silence,
And lie quite still before Thy majesty.

Thus would I listen, Lord, in true obedience,
And wait Thy word, nor make one low reply;
Think not a thought, and harbour no desire;
Content to live, to suffer, or to die.

Eye hath not seen, nor heart of man conceived,
The things Thou hast prepared in worlds above.
And words all fail; so, Lord, I ask for silence,
The trustful silence of a perfect love.

Silence of reverence and true obedience;
Thy creature's will reposing in Thy will;
Love sitting at the feet of her Creator,
Because she knows Thee—learning to be still.”¹

(iv) Blessed by the certainty of God's forgiveness, rejoicing in His goodness, attuned afresh to His Will, ready to receive of His bounty, the praying man will now, with all the vigour of confident faith, lay hold, for the whole fellowship and for himself, of some of the inexhaustible resources of the Eternal God. He will spread out before God the whole range of his need, and the need of others

¹ *The Adventure of Prayer*, Andrew, pp. 29-30.

whose lives are touched by his; and, having in mind Christ's gracious promises about believing prayer, he will not merely ask, but *take* from God what God wants to give. Nothing is too small, no detail too slight, to bring to the Heavenly Father. It is well to talk to Him about everything: home, work, friendships, recreations, joys, sorrows, and life in general; and naturally one will bring to Him all the inner life of thought and faults and fears and hopes and longings. Everything is laid out before Him. It is not of necessity divided neatly into specific petitions; it seems perhaps rather a jumble as you make a heap of it before His altar; but He knows what to do with it all, and in due course the "answer" infallibly arrives, in the shape of a clearer understanding of some immediate problem, a knowledge of the right course as between perplexing alternatives, a straightening out of a relationship gone wrong, a definite conquest of some besetting sin, a new, self-forgetting devotion to the affairs of God's Kingdom, a fresh zest in life and sense of joy in God and His work in the world.

But it soon becomes evident that to pray merely for yourself and your own immediate concerns is as impossible as it is undesirable; "no man," and certainly no Christian, "liveth unto himself," and petition quickly merges into intercession. There is no such thing as a purely individual, isolated human life; and this sense of human solidarity becomes a very real thing to anyone who learns to pray in Christ's school of prayer. People sometimes seem to think that "intercession" is something that can be tacked on as an occasional "extra" to one's ordinary praying, a rather meritorious "work of supererogation," as ancient ecclesiastics might have called it. But to "share God" is not an "extra," but an integral part of normal Christian living; and "intercessory prayer" is one of the most potent means whereby this sharing may be done. It is an absorbing, an exacting task. It is deeply

charged alike with suffering and with joy. More, possibly, than anything else in human experience it brings you very near to the Cross of Christ. Because the essence of intercession is to *care*, it can only begin when you begin to care about other people and their welfare quite as much as you care for yourself. That is the Christ way; in Gethsemane, on Calvary, He went all conceivable lengths in identifying Himself with sinning, suffering humanity of all the ages. And He summons His followers to "drink of that cup." The true-hearted among them have never hesitated. Some of them have come to "care" so much that they would even—if such a thing were possible—"lose" Christ if only these others might "find" Him. "I could wish myself," cries St. Paul, "accursed and banished from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my natural kinsmen"¹; it is a consuming passion with him to share, somehow, in Christ's redemptive suffering for men: "I am suffering on your behalf, but I rejoice in that; I would make up the full sum of all that Christ has to suffer in my person on behalf of the Church, His body."² Whenever there is "love" which in resolute faith lays hold of Divine blessing on behalf of another personality, then, whether or not there should happen to be spoken petitions, the priestly work of "intercession" has begun. I should like to quote here the words of one, a missionary in India, who writes of what he knows: "When a man, by constant contemplation of the Passion and Resurrection of Our Lord, finds himself so inflamed with love of God and man that he cannot bear the thought of any man living without the knowledge of God, he may begin to bear the Cross of Christ. If, as he bears it, this longing for the glory of God and for the salvation of all men becomes so great that it fills all his thoughts and desires, then he has that one thing without which no man can truly be a messenger

¹ Romans ix. 3 (Moffatt).

² Colossians i. 24 (Moffatt).

of Christ. Then, if the Spirit of God so call him, he may take his share in the reconciling of India to God, through the death and risen life of Jesus the Christ.”¹

For most of us, perhaps, the “machinery” of intercession works rather by pictures than by words. A friend of yours is ill in hospital. You think of him in his great need; perhaps fighting for his life. You picture him weak, possibly depressed, fearful; you think of the mysterious disease germ sapping his vitality, undermining his strength. Then you picture the life that flows from God Himself, strengthening all the “natural” forces in your friend’s body that make for recovery, ceaselessly pouring into the depths of his mind peace and joy and hope. You conceive of him as too enfeebled to do it for himself; so on his behalf you lay hold, almost with a spiritual violence, of this “life” for mind and body which he so sorely needs. And it may well be that in the Divine ordering of the universe your “love” for him, your wrestling for him in the unseen world, is the means of releasing a something from the Divine Resources which meets his necessity. I have heard of a missionary who uses an effective “picture scheme” for his intercessions: “Alone and far from home and kindred he pins up on his study wall photographs of all the people for whom he wants to pray. Every night after supper he goes into the room alone, and leaving the place dark, he lets his electric torch illuminate one portrait among them all. To this person he talks aloud, putting into words his every wish for them. Then, when his thoughts have gone as high and as far as they will, he writes to that friend telling what he has done.”²

There is no question here of mere telepathy, or of a sort of attempted long-distance hypnotism. When I try, through prayer, to meet the moral or physical need of my absent friend, it is not something *in me* that I endeavour

¹ *Out of Bondage*, by Stephen Neill, pp. 135, 136.

² *Ways of Praying*, Lester, p. 52.

to impart to him; there would be little benefit for him from my own poverty-stricken resources. My sole object is to picture his need and bring it to God, leaving it to God in His mercy and wisdom—using, if it may be, my desire—to meet that need from the Divine resources. Anything less than that would make God a mere telephonic exchange for purely human intercommunication. Psychology has thrown a good deal of light on the mutual “influence” of human personalities, especially in the realm of the subconscious; and it may well be that this delicate and marvellous mental mechanism is one of God’s instruments in utilizing human co-operation. As Professor Streeter has pointed out in *Reality*: “Our principle that God works in and through the laws of psychology suggests the hypothesis that the kind of psychic *rapport* between individuals of which telepathic phenomena are an evidence may be a means by which God, through us, may effect His own good purposes. If God uses the medical skill of a doctor to preserve a life which otherwise would be lost, if He uses the charitable disposition of a millionaire to save refugees from starvation, if He uses the persuasiveness of a preacher to turn sinners to repentance, there is no reason why He should not use the ‘psychic radio-activity’ (supposing such a thing exists) of any individual to produce a change of heart in an erring friend, or the hope which will stimulate vitality in a sick one.”¹

To pray for one person at a time seems a manageable task. But is it really any use for a solitary Christian to pray for—say—world peace, or missions in China, or for the Disarmament Conference, or for a whole nation, or for the Church? How does one set about it, and in what sort of way can one conceive such prayer achieving any result? In some such way, I would suggest, as the following. The basic fact of all—if Christianity is true—is that God’s creative love is unceasingly at work to bring all creation home to

¹ *Reality*, p. 297.

Himself. His inexhaustible will for good and power for good are all the time pressing in upon humanity, seeking entrance; and all responsive, spiritually sensitive human personalities provide a myriad points of entrance for that Love and Power. Suppose that there are thousands of Christians praying, say, for statesmen assembled at Geneva; that "prayer," that vicarious opening of windows for the Divine light, may well make it more possible than it would otherwise have been for those statesmen to act with wisdom and goodwill and understanding—to achieve decisions, in fact, that are in tune with and not in opposition to the Will of God. Each individual Christian, using his knowledge and imagination, offering up his own will and desire to God for His use, adds thus his own tiny contribution to the sum total of Divine-human co-operation. It would be as reasonable for him to refuse this co-operation on the ground of its being so infinitesimal in relation to the whole as for a soldier in an army to say that his rifle would not be missed; if all the soldiers could take that line there would clearly be no army. And, as we have seen, the Christian is always and inescapably a living part of the Christian fellowship. What the whole Christian fellowship might achieve as a compact body of willing and intelligent intercessors we have hardly yet begun to see; this is something for future generations to explore.

(v) To sum up. We have suggested that a wise use of the daily quiet time will include: (a) an act of preparation, (b) adoration, praise and thanksgiving, (c) a space for silence, and (d) an endeavour to "take hold," individually and corporately, of God's resources for all human need. One other quite indispensable aid to Christian living, whether or not the use of it is fitted in during the main period of quiet or at some other time in the day, is (e) to browse in the large pastures of that great library of books describing man's experience of God's activity in the Old and New Testaments. Without this nourishment which the Bible pro-

vides the spiritual life is liable to become starved and stuffy, and prayer thin and monotonous. Moreover, Christianity is an historical religion; and the "faith" of its adherents must necessarily include some apprehension of the "fact of Christ," of God's revelation of Himself on this earthly scene through that unique personality and the historical events which preceded and followed His incarnate life. How the Bible came to be written, what its significance is for our own day, how it has been affected by historical and literary criticism, how to read it with profit and understanding—these are questions which every Christian should ask and answer for himself, and which can be easily answered with the aid of some of the many admirable books on the subject available to-day. With that general statement we must leave the subject here.¹ I would only remark that there is an "art" of meditation, as there is of prayer itself; and that it is an art which the "average Christian" can learn without great difficulty.

If a Christian desires to make the best use of his prayer times, and to discharge at all fully his obligations as an "intercessor," he will find it necessary to make a careful list, spread over the days of the week and of the month, of things to pray about and people to pray for; and then he must use his list with due regard for variation and spontaneity. He will also probably find some help in books of devotion, and printed prayers, though these should be used sparingly. And, of course, there are many religiously minded people, especially Anglican clergy, who find that the essential outline of penitence and praise, of prayer and intercession, is admirably provided in the daily Mattins and Evensong of the English Prayer Book; and most of all, in the office of the Holy Communion. Where these Services are used daily, although their main intention must always be corporate, they can none the less be made to

¹ It is perhaps permissible to refer to the chapter on this subject in the writer's *Modern Discipleship*.

serve, largely though not completely, the purposes of private prayer. But probably for most Christians these, and other liturgical services, perform a function essential indeed in the life of Christian fellowship, but different from the function fulfilled by the daily periods of private prayer.

In the suggestions here made for the use of these prayer times, I have set forth what seems to me the absolutely essential "acts" of praise, intercession and so on, which together make up that movement of the soul towards God we call "prayer." But it is not always desirable, or possible, to do all these things at one time; and I realize full well how hard it is for some people to find time, or privacy, or both. For many, perhaps for most, the best time of day for prayer is the early morning, when one is fresh and alert, and before the work of the day begins. But whatever the difficulties, from circumstances or from the tyranny of moods and the temptations of slackness, it is worth while making a great effort to keep a trysting-time with God morning and evening.

Mention has been made of the importance of spontaneity in prayer. No prayer scheme should be allowed to become too rigid, or conventional. And over and above the times set aside for regular prayer, every day—sometimes each hour—should have its little acts of recollection. The occasion of such acts will be multifarious; if you are on the look out, you will "see God" in the beauty of a rose, in the face of a child, in the words of a friend, in the pages of a book, in some news in the paper, in the fun of a game, in the crowds you pass in street and bus and train; and such moments of insight will call forth a spontaneous inward ejaculation of praise and prayer. I have read about a Christian woman of fine character, who made a practice, whenever she met a stranger or whenever a new-comer entered the room, of saying to herself: "Now I wonder what of God I am going to find in

this person?"¹ Among the richest gifts of middle life and old age are the stored memories of unexpected moments when there was a sudden and radiant flash of the Divine illuminating the dullness of the daily task and lightening the burden of unremitting toil. God has "His own secret stairs" into the human heart, and you never know when you may suddenly hear the sound of His footsteps.

The effect on human life and character of this mystic communion with the Divine, and of the regular practice of that communion in daily "prayer," is literally inestimable. Perhaps the most marked effect is an accession of vitality. The man of prayer is a man superlatively *alive*; with spirit keen, mind alert, body healthy, and the whole personality aglow with a sense of confidence and power. "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength . . . they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary, and they shall walk, and not faint."² "I can do all things," cried St. Paul, "through Christ that strengtheneth me."³ The practice of Christian prayer will always meet the need of those who lack that elusive "over-plus" which makes the whole difference between really living and merely existing. There is no doubt that unless all Christian experience is an illusion, into our impoverished personalities there does pour, through "prayer," something of the same Divine energy that sustains the universe, and that raised Jesus from the dead. Fear, anxiety, worry, heaviness of spirit, helplessness and hopelessness about oneself, about others, about circumstances—these things have to give way before the "joy of the Lord," like mists dissolved by the rising sun; and it becomes, not a pious

¹ *Ways of Praying*, Muriel Lester, p. 26.

² Isaiah xl. 29-31.

³ Phil. iv. 13.

petition but a normal experience to "meet all that comes of good or ill, with gallant and high-hearted happiness." "No task is too hard," says a modern saint, "no difficulty insuperable, no circumstances impossible, for those for whom the Father's love and power are freely available." In Bunyan's immortal phraseology in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Christian records about the pilgrims that "their King is at their whistle, He is never out of hearing, and if at any time they be put to the worst, He comes in to help them."

Christianity is inescapably personal—"He loved me and gave Himself for me"; and at the same time completely corporate—"Our Father . . . give us our daily bread." The life of personal communion with God described in this chapter gains immeasurably if it is lived—as indeed at its best it must be lived—within the context of the larger life of the Christian society. And the life of the society as a whole will suffer from a spiritual poverty unless it is constantly enriched by the individual experience of its members. The great thinker and mystic Baron von Hügel used to say that the mystical element in religion, without the discipline of the institutional and intellectual elements, grows rank and unbalanced. The religious man who depends on and rejoices in his mystic contact with the Divine may easily fail to recognize the greatness of his debt to Christian history and Christian environment, and so prove slow in repaying to the great Christian fellowship some portion of what he owes. Moreover, every bit of true Christian work in the world, and of true Christian experience, is co-operative. To build the Kingdom means, always, labouring with God and with one another; to explore the "length and the breadth, the depths and height of the love of Christ" is always a joint adventure "with all the saints"; to find the dynamic to work God's work is, always, the reward of corporate

desire and expectancy—"Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." And the society must contrive to hold the balance true between its work and its worship. There are those, feeling acutely the sufferings of their fellow men, whose only gospel is the social gospel. And there are others who, following such a modern prophet as Karl Barth, would concentrate entirely on the transcendent and the supernatural. Jesus surely leads His followers between these two extremes; He and His Gospel are both "this-worldly" and "other-worldly."

We have sought to see, in this book, something of what the society of Jesus Christ is called to do in this world. The society is incapable of doing what Christ wants it to unless, through its worship, its life is perpetually refreshed at the eternal fountains. Here, it goes almost without saying, is the point and purpose of its public worship. "Church-going" has become too easily dissociated from the true function of worship. It is, of course, lamentably true that only too often church services are not in a high degree worshipful; prayers perfunctorily said, poor music, uninspiring sermons, slipshod and slovenly ritual, and an inert congregation, easily obscure the true object of the whole proceeding. And there are too many religious people who persist in thinking of their church service purely in terms of what they can get out of it, and as if it was something done for them with little or no responsibility on their part.

The truth about worship is quite otherwise. Here, for instance, is an ordinary church, with an "average" congregation, on a Sunday morning, gathered for the Holy Communion or for some other divine service. Who actually are these worshippers and what are they trying to do? They are, properly speaking, representatives of the local Christian community; they are a part, numerically large or small—a local part, in London or Glasgow or Nairobi or Hong Kong, of the world-wide "Catholic"

Christian fellowship, gathered for their weekly worship. And what are they doing? They are assembled together in order that, with every resource of prayer and praise, of silence and of speech, they may offer to God their common life and the life of the world around, and receive afresh from Him inspiration and strength as they go forth again into the world to bear witness to Him and do His work. When the Society keeps clearly in view this *raison d'être* of its worship, then it takes pains to see that it is adequately related to common life, and at the same time as real, living, beautiful, and sincere as it can be made. This ideal of public worship is imperfectly realized as yet, but liturgical reform is on its way; reform which aims at a far greater degree of variety and spontaneity, of adjustment and adaptation; and just as for its work in the world the Church is rapidly finding new and better methods, so "the Church at prayer" will increasingly discover how, through its worship, it can explore and utilize the fathomless resources of the Divine life.



WANDERING THOUGHTS

Such practical difficulties as wandering thoughts must be overcome if our prayer is to become effective. We will listen to two counsellors on the subject. Brother Lawrence in The Practice of the Presence of God and Leslie D. Weatherhead in Psychology and Life.

You tell me nothing new: you are not the only one that is troubled with wandering thoughts. Our mind is extremely roving; but as the will is mistress of all our faculties, she must recall them, and carry them to God, as their last end.

When the mind, for want of being sufficiently reduced

by recollection, at our first engaging in devotion, has contracted certain bad habits of wandering and dissipation, they are difficult to overcome, and commonly draw us, even against our wills, to the things of the earth.

I believe one remedy for this is, to confess our faults, and to humble ourselves before God. I do not advise you to use multiplicity of words in prayer; many words and long discourses being often the occasions of wandering: hold yourself in prayer before God, like a dumb or paralytic beggar at a rich man's gate: let it be *your* business to keep your mind in the presence of the Lord. If it sometimes wanders, and withdraws itself from Him, do not much disquiet yourself for that; trouble and disquiet serve rather to distract the mind than to re-collect it; the will must bring it back in tranquillity; if you persevere in this manner, God will have pity on you.

One way to re-collect the mind easily in the time of prayer, and preserve it more in tranquillity, is not to let it wander too far at other times: you should keep it strictly in the presence of God; and being accustomed to think of Him often, you will find it easy to keep your mind calm in the time of prayer, or at least to recall it from its wanderings.

I have told you already of the advantages we may draw from this practice of the presence of God: let us set about it seriously and pray for one another.

*

THE ART OF CONCENTRATION

The art of concentration is partly seen to be the art of managing the mesh just under the surface of consciousness. We find the best minds are those which can tighten the mesh so that the irrelevant things do not come through. You will let through, as you read this chapter,

memories of occasions and happenings which illustrate the points I try to make. These will help you to remember the argument, and make the reading of the book of greater value. You will exclude any memories which the Law of the Association of Ideas brings up to consciousness, unless they are relevant and helpful.

The art of praying depends much on the art of controlling the mesh between the subconscious and the conscious. As I pray I open the mesh to let through the memory of a child I saw in hospital yesterday. She must come into my conscious prayers and the lamp of attention be flashed on her. But I must tighten the mesh against memories of the concert I went to last night, or my prayer will become continually interrupted by unwanted and irrelevant memories bobbing up to the surface.



THE USE OF THE IMAGINATION

Irrelevancy in thought and dryness in prayer are often due to our failure to use the imagination. W. E. Sangster has some very practical suggestions to offer about this in his book He Is Able.

Lack of imagination and an undisciplined mind are obstacles to prayer. Building a chapel in the soul, for which we have pleaded, seems impossible to people deficient in imagination, and, if imagination built it, their inability to concentrate would make it difficult for them to worship there. The great Bishop Butler certainly assumed "a licence in the use of words" when he derided imagination. It is a great gift of God to men. Modern psychology is emphatic on the point. To see the unseen by an effort of the mind: to look at Jesus: to be present (as Ruskin said) "as if in the body, at every recorded event in the history of the Redeemer." This

gives a wing to earth-born creatures, and scales the heights of heaven. What need there is to exercise imagination in prayer! The man who feels that he is merely speaking into space soon ceases to speak at all. The man who both reads his Bible and prays with imagination, finds the book become autobiographic, and his prayers a deep delight. It is a sanctified imagination which would revolutionize the devotions of many people. If they lived *in* the Gospels, and felt themselves the leper whom Jesus healed, the blind mind whose sight He restored, the dying thief whom He pardoned, the disciples who first heard that He had risen from the dead, what a delight the book would become! And if they turned in that spirit to prayer, and *saw* Him, how swiftly the prayer would flow. The Psalmist said, "I have set the Lord always before me." So can the simplest soul. Imagination was given to us that, while yet on earth, we might mingle with the heavenly throng. We close our eyes in prayer that we might open them to glory. Let us *see* God, and prayer will break from us as the water gushed from the rock.

Lady Tennyson had a lovely face. Even the scornful housemaid, who contemptuously referred to her master, the poet, as "only a public writer," said of her mistress, "Oh, she is an angel." Tennyson himself remarked one night to a friend, after his wife had gone to bed, "It is a tender, spiritual face." Her looks matched her spirit, and her sanctity was outstanding, even in an age of formal goodness. She knew the use of imagination in prayer. She told her husband once: "When I pray, I see the face of God smiling upon me."

Let no beginner in prayer abandon the privilege because of mind wandering. It can be conquered. A quickened imagination and a resolute will cannot be denied. Even though, in the early stages, the precious minutes tick away and all the time seems spent in bringing the mind back from its wanderings and fixing it again on

prayer, they are not moments lost. Such discipline will exercise the muscles of the will, and the day will dawn when the sweetest meditation and the most earnest prayer will be possible even amid distraction.

Enslavement to feeling is another fruitful cause of neglected prayer. People do not pray because they do not feel like it, and they offer the excuse with a certain cheerful assurance that it will be accepted. They assume that prayers are only efficacious when they rise from an eager and emotional heart.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Many of the saints believe that floods of feeling belong only to the elementary stages of discipleship. All of them agree that we must keep our appointments with God, whether we feel like it or not. The most noble and enjoyable vocations bring their times of drudgery. If life was lived on a basis of feeling alone, nothing would be stable; appointments would not be kept; morality would be undermined; caprice would dethrone order in this world. If we have an engagement with a friend at a certain hour, we keep it, however disinclined we may feel when the time comes. Are we to be less courteous with God?

Nor should it be forgotten that God can do more for us, when we pray against inclination, than when we pray with it. The meek submission of our will deepens our surrender: our resolution to engage in prayer strengthens thought-control. We rise from such prayers infinitely stronger than if we had knelt only at the dictate of desire. Faith, not feeling, measures the efficacy of prayer. Jesus never said, "Thy feeling hath made thee whole." He put the emphasis always on faith, and faith receives a finer witness when we pray against inclination than when we pray with it.

Too much stress upon speaking is the final common obstacle that we will mention. People unpractised in prayer suppose that no prayer is being offered unless they

are talking all the time. They seem to know nothing of dumb adoration, or the silent rapture of gazing on those glorious scars. Augustine said that our prayers ought to contain not *multa locutio* but *multa precatio*—"not much speaking, but much prayer." The method of prayer taught by Studdert Kennedy was largely wordless. It depended on lifting pictures, by a devout imagination, from the Gospels, and gazing and gazing on them. None who has practised it will deny its power. To join the company in the Upper Room and have one's feet washed by Jesus is an awesome experience, blasting the pride in our soul as by a great explosive.

There are times when speech is easy, and when one can pour out the heart to God in a torrent of words, with all the natural simplicity of a child talking to his father, but never let it be thought that prayer is only for the fluent. God forbid! The most inarticulate can pray. When grief, or disappointment, or sin strikes one dumb, devotion does not end. There is still the upward look. Even when one weeps, it is one thing to weep to oneself and another to weep to Christ.

All the world knows now of old Père Chaffangeon, who used to remain for hours before the altar in the church at Ars, without even moving his lips; it seems that he was speaking to God.

"And what do you say to Him?" the Curé asked.

"Oh," replied the old peasant, "He looks at me, and I look at Him."

"The greatest of mystics," says Henri Ghéon, "have found no formula more simple, more exact, more complete, more sublime, to express the conversation of the soul with God."

But let us turn from the obstacles, and our simple counsel on how they may be overcome, to the help which Christ offers, and by which the impulse to pray is nourished, and the duty lost in the delight. A few

minutes spent with the Bible is usually a swift preparation for prayer. A short, unhurried meditation on some fragment of scripture, and then silence, quickens the spirit of devotion. George Muller, of Bristol, always approached his mighty prayers in that way, and claimed that it delivered him from mind-wandering.

Then think of the many aspects of prayer. The people who find their times of communion tedious often regard prayer as nothing more than asking for things. The many-sided nature of the devotional life is strange to them. There is adoration, the awesome, humbling obeisance of the self before God, the rapt gazing on glory when the soul soars "and time and sense seem all no more." There is confession. Not some trite phrase which bundles all our beastliness together, and skates lightly away, saying, "Forgive me for anything I have done wrong," but a mind which pursues holiness with method, digs out the evil things inside us and, in the pure presence of God, looks and loathes. There is intercession. How any man with faith in prayer, and a heart to pity, can fail to fill an odd half-hour at any time in earnest intercession, is hard to understand. The burdens of mankind are so numerous and heavy, that those who do not intercede lack either faith in prayer, or feeling for their fellows.

There is thanksgiving, too. Addison declared that eternity was too short to utter all the gratitude of his heart, but most people leave it out entirely or dismiss it with a word. Hard to pray for ten minutes? In ten minutes one could hardly think of the things which demand thanksgiving, much less compass all the other aspects of prayer!

And if we leave petitions aside—and petitions can always look after themselves—there is still consecration, the fresh surrender of the heart to God. "That vow renewed shall daily hear." What joy to gather every wandering thought and put one's whole life on the altar. What inward rest to feel the wonder of acceptance anew.

And all these are only *some* of the aspects of prayer. A wider survey of the country to be covered would surely serve the folk who find a sparsity of thought when they pray.

Not only is prayer quickened as we dwell on its many sidedness, but, still more, as we dwell upon its efficacy. Think of what it does. It changes the most intractable stuff in the universe—human nature—and makes sinners into saints. It brings heaven to earth. It fights vice and fosters virtue. It succours souls in peril and becomes a password at the gate of death.

Prayer puts the sick, and the infirm, in the forefront of those who fight the battle of God. No one has ceased to serve who thinks to pray. It will damp the delights of heaven for some of us when we discover how much prayer did on earth, and remember that we prayed so ill. A wounded soldier told me during the war that his convalescence at home had had one great pain for him. He witnessed his mother's anxiety for his brothers who were still at the front. He heard her prayers and saw her feverish anxiety concerning the postman. He saw the furrows deepen in her face when neither letter nor field-card was put in her hand. "It made me think," he said, "how often I might have written myself when I was out there, but thoughtlessly put it off." The memory of his selfishness was a shadow on the joys of home.

The memory of our prayerlessness may be a shadow on the joys of heaven. It may be that the greatest thing which we can do for anybody is to pray for them.

If a man treasures up the singular answers to prayer which he has heard: if he practises prayer and has his own answers to treasure up with them, he will not lapse into doubt. The experiment will end in an experience. There are many, many theoretical difficulties about prayer, but they are only academic questions to the people who pray. They *know* that it works and is real. . . . They know.



PICTURE PRAYING AS TAUGHT BY
STUDDERT KENNEDY

The method of "picture prayer" taught by the late Studdert Kennedy referred to by the last writer, was explained by Ronald Sinclair in his book When We Pray. Most people will find its suggested method of prayer exceedingly helpful, and we particularly commend it to those who find it difficult to concentrate in prayer.

We have created by our imagination a little room at the centre of the soul. The door of this inner chamber can be locked on the inside. All people have some such secret place in their innermost mind. Thither they resort for retirement from the world, and therein they keep far away from public gaze their secrets, their disappointed hopes, their cherished ambitions, and their secret faults and vices. Some are afraid ever to cross the threshold of that little chamber of the mind for fear of the ugly things they may find there; whilst others often go in to gaze in the mirror they have hung upon the walls and indulge in what is called introspection. Some there are who keep their most precious memories of long-forgotten happy days locked up in that room, and they spend hours brooding there on the old days and the old faces. What goes on in that hidden secret place has a tremendous bearing on our characters: it is there that the self throws off all poses, masks and disguises. When we cross that threshold there is no longer any need for appearing different from what we really are: we are our true selves in that inner place. And it is there that we worship our god. Our god is not necessarily the God we profess to believe in in public; but that person or thing for which we really live. There are

still lords many and gods many: most of us are polytheists within with a veneer of monotheism without. Within this strange inner sanctuary we worship the person or thing which we live for. It may be money, fame, popularity, success, lust, self, a lover, pleasure or something else. A man's god is that which he tends to think of when alone and unoccupied: that on which he meditates. We can find out what it is which we really worship in our heart of hearts by asking ourselves the question: "What is it which if it were taken away from me would render my life purposeless and meaningless?"

One of the great unchanging laws of human nature is that what a man most admires and thinks about most often in his heart of hearts he tends to imitate and to become like.

"Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery"; and almost unconsciously we tend to grow like that which we hold up before the eyes of our soul as wholly lovable. Moreover, as we have seen, the soul is like a photographic plate, and tends to reproduce that which it looks at most often. This is especially true in childhood, even in babyhood, and often the impressions of our earliest infancy help to determine much of our character for life.

Many Christians, who long for holiness, are prone to indulge in frequent self-examination. In other words they spend a considerable amount of time in looking at their reflection in the mirror they have set up upon the walls of the inner chamber of their minds. This may be a good practice occasionally; but it is not the way to improvement of character. If we grow like that which we are constantly gazing upon with attention, we shall only grow like ourselves by constant introspection. The best way to correct a fault is by looking at its opposite virtue. Thus the man who is constantly giving way to pride will only become humble by looking at an example of humility.

The walls of the inner chamber of the mind should be adorned with pictures of Jesus Christ. By spending time gazing at Him we shall grow like Him. This practice of looking long and lovingly at the picture of Jesus Christ, "the portrait of the Unseen God," is sometimes called Meditation, and it is of vital importance in the art of prayer.

People often find when they start to pray that their minds are a blank. They cannot think of anything in particular; they are conscious of a sort of vague darkness. The figure of Jesus does not rise up before them: they strain the eyes of their soul, but see nothing. No knock is heard on the door of the inner chamber, and they begin to wonder whether prayer is not a hopeless delusion. They are tempted to give it all up in despair.

On these occasions it is best to turn to some well-loved and well-known picture of Jesus in action, taken from the Gospel story. It is a good practice to have half a dozen or so of these pictures to fall back on in time of need. By constant loving dwelling upon them we shall know them well, and they will rise up before us, when our minds fail to conjure up any other conception of Christ. Studdert Kennedy used to advise us to have one such picture, taken from the Gospels, for every day of the week. They will hang upon the walls of our little inner chamber in our minds, and we shall thus have them ready at hand to turn to at once. They will naturally, at first, be the pictures of His Life which appeal to us most strongly. Let us suppose, for the sake of example, that we suffer from the common sin of pride. We shall love to dwell on any picture which sets vividly before our minds the humility of Our Lord. Perhaps we are especially fond of that exquisite picture given to us by St. John, in chapter xiii, of the Christ washing His disciples' feet. We shall go into the inner room of our mind, and carefully shutting the door against that wounded pride of ours which is trying

to get in, we shall open our Bible at St. John, chapter xiii. We shall then try to picture the scene as vividly as possible. We shall not be afraid of giving full play to the imagination. By its use we shall create a picture for ourselves which will last us for ever. In the case we are considering, we shall imagine the little band of friends climbing up the outside stairway of the house to the upper room. Their voices are raised in anger. They are tired and dusty and hot. They are very like tired children. We shall follow them into the cool upper room. What is it they are quarrelling about? Simon Peter says that he has always been the first, James and John argue they are young and zealous, and so on. Instinctively we turn and look at Jesus. What will He say? He looks terribly sad. It is His last night on earth: on these twelve men He had lavished all His care: He had given them His most priceless teaching: they had lived day in and day out with Him. It all seemed to be in vain. Their minds were still dwelling on ambition rather than service; pride still ruled their wills. We watch Him. Quietly He lays aside His garments whilst they scramble for the best places. He takes a towel, pours water into a basin, and gently and lovingly washes each dusty foot in turn. It was the work of the meanest slave boy; but Jesus was ever among them as He that serveth. Slowly the work of love goes on and He comes round at length to Simon Peter. We hear the latter's protest, and the answer. At long last He comes to Judas. We wonder what will happen now. Judas looks away: it is almost too much for him: he cannot bear it. Jesus takes each foot of the traitor, handles it as if it were a priceless jewel, wipes it and then gently kisses them each in turn. That is our picture of the humility of Jesus. We shall gaze at it often long and lovingly, and we shall be led to worship and adore Him who by His lowly humility reveals the lowly humility of the God of Love. "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." I think the moments

which we have spent in that upper room—for we seem to have been there taking part in the picture—will have made us just a little more humble.

We shall love to spend time, too, in the stable at Bethlehem. If we are fond of our own position and bodily comfort we shall often find ourselves gazing at that wondrous picture of the stable. It is not the stable of the Christmas cards that we see there. It is a filthy, muddy place, cold, draughty and dark. Yet it was the only place Love could find to rest His Head in when He came knocking at the door of our world. As we meditate on that picture we shall find ourselves in that stable, splashing through the mud, to offer Him a resting-place within the hidden recesses of our hearts. In thus looking long and lovingly at these pictures of the Lord we shall forget all about ourselves, and we shall unconsciously and imperceptibly grow daily more like Him; for that which we are constantly looking at and which we most love and admire we tend to reproduce in our own characters.

The practice is quite simple and straightforward. First we go into our silent place, then we quite deliberately shut the door, then we choose our picture. It may be one we know well. If not, we shall buy one out of the Gospel story at the price of a little reading, a little thought, and the use of our imagination. We shall look at the picture, try to visualize it as vividly as we possibly can. Then the frame, as it were, tends to disappear, and we seem to be absorbed in the picture. We are no longer in our homes, but in Galilee or Jerusalem. We shall take our place in the group in the picture before us, and it will be a living thing to us—a real scene. We often get this peculiar feeling when we read a novel and get lost in the story. We suddenly come back to earth with a bump, lay aside our story, and realize that it is an hour past our normal bedtime.

So it is with this way of praying in pictures. After we

have gazed at the central Figure in our pictures, we shall realize that He who stands or moves before us is the picture or portrait of God Himself in human terms. We shall remember that He is always like that, that He is like that here and now, for He is unchanging and perfect Love. This will bring us to our knees in worship and utter adoration. Before we leave the silent room of our minds, where we have indeed been with Jesus, we shall make some quite definite resolve—not a vague, general, aimless resolution to be “good”; but a quite definite promise to Our Lord to do something for Him at some moment of the day which lies ahead. This is most important; for we must not be content to let our emotions and feelings play their part in our prayer time divorced from the will. To end our prayer with our feelings stirred and no definite resolve to take back to our daily life in the world outside is a dangerous practice. It leads nowhere. To use a simple analogy, it is like running a motor engine with the clutch out. Petrol is wasted, the engine gets hot and “races,” and there is no result in moving the car.

Man is a threefold unity of thought, freedom and will. This method of prayer involves the use of all three, and, therefore, of the whole man.

There are times when our Lord comes to us in the inner chamber, as it were, without our seeking Him by means of Gospel pictures. This is a wonderful privilege. It is not something we ought to depend on. It is due to no effort or merit on our part; but is just a loving act on His part. He sometimes does this to encourage us to persevere in our way of prayer. If He does not visit us in this way for long periods at a time, we must not think something is wrong. We must just go quietly on trusting Him. He knows what is best for us. This way of prayer can be practised without words entirely. Should words be required, they will rise spontaneously from the heart, or else we may use well-known prayers, such as the Lord's

Prayer, the Gloria, the Te Deum or any other prayer or act of worship.

We must not lay too much stress on our feelings in this way of prayer. Many people get discouraged because, as they say, they *feel* nothing in their prayers. The imaginative powers and emotional life of people vary enormously. Sometimes they vary in the same person from day to day, according to the state of the weather or of our bodies. We must not build our prayer life, or our religion, on our feelings and emotions. We need not envy the people with vivid imaginations or easily aroused emotions; they often suffer acutely from both. What God requires of us is not a rush of feeling or pleasurable emotions, or vivid picturings of the imagination, but a quiet, steady, plodding perseverance with the will. In fact, to base our prayer life and our religion generally on feelings alone is like feeding the body on sugar cakes—"little bits of God knows what with cherries on the top of them," as Studdert Kennedy used to say—rather than on plain, dull, wholesome bread. To give up praying because we do not "feel" like it would be as silly as going on hunger strike because we cannot have sugar cakes to eat.

There are probably many people for whom the way of prayer I am trying to describe is unsuited. If so, let them realize that we are all different and consequently no two people will find the same method of approach to God equally suitable. This way has, to my certain knowledge, helped many souls; but it is far from being the only way. If it is no use to you, discard it at once and try a better one.

*

PRAY AFFIRMATIVELY

We have already noted the need for affirmative or believing prayer. But in considering method in prayer it

is wise to remind ourselves again of this important truth. We will accordingly listen to Leslie Weatherhead emphasizing this from the standpoint of the psychologist. These passages are from Psychology and Life.

I am driven to the view that what is called auto-suggestion may be a very valuable method of praying. In a memorable sentence¹ Jesus said: "All things whatsoever ye pray and ask for, believe that ye have received them and ye shall have them." God's gifts are received by believing that they are available, not by imploring a reluctant God to hear and come to our aid. I once heard a man pray with uplifted fists and loud voice for God's gift of peace. One would have thought that his picture of God must have been that of a reluctant old gentleman sitting by the fire reading, who, if the prayer were importunate enough, would put aside his book and say to one of the angels, "For pity's sake give that man some peace."

But God is all around us, longing that we should appropriate the peace He offers. It is not an unworthy conception of petitionary prayer to fall asleep murmuring the words, "The peace of God is mine. The peace of God is mine. I shall sleep quietly all night and awaken in the morning, calm, cheerful and serene, ready for anything the day may bring." God does not leave us when we fall asleep. He still besieges us with His endless grace. His divine energies are still working to bring us wholly into His will and purposes, into all the wonderful fullness of life which is His plan. His ordained processes go on working in the unconscious. We should try to co-operate with Him. For so He giveth to His beloved even in sleep.

In normal life we often can't because we think we can't. Will-power is overcome by the inhibitions of our lack of confidence, our lack of faith that we can succeed. We try, but nothing happens. We may even get worse. If we

¹ Mark xi. 24.

relaxed our efforts and drenched our minds with the suggestion, "I can," and especially, "I can in Him who enables me," we should be astonished at the success we should achieve. For then the wheel of the will and the stream of expectation would be running in the same direction.

Our very prayers sometimes do the opposite of what we need. For sometimes they involve the dragging out of past failures and falls to such an extent that the spectacle dismays us, and the final suggestion left with a mind that prays for, and wills deliverance, is of failure in the future carried forward from memories of the past. When we have faced failure and admitted its shame, and experienced a cleansing penitence, then we must put our sins where God has put them, behind His back and ours, and let the mind dwell on future victory, confident that His strength will be added to our own. Not to do that is to deny ourselves and deny Him also; refusing to believe that, though others may find release, there is any hope for us.

Let the machinery of the will, then, be kept in good repair. Let it, by discipline and endeavour, be efficient and strong. But then let us learn how to supply it with the driving forces which it needs if it is going to function adequately. Interest, imagination, confidence, are secrets we must understand. They flood the mind with feeling. Without them we are as those who laboriously push wheels round with their hands. But with them energies are released in personality greater than we ever dreamed. So concerning your troubles, let your mind soak itself in the thought of triumphant victory and go to sleep saying, "In Him who strengthens me I can, I can, I can."

*

A SUGGESTED SCHEME

Having considered method in prayer, let us glance at some possible schemes that may give us help and guidance

in the enrichment and enlargement of our prayers. The first is taken from Dr. William Adams Brown's The Life of Prayer in a World of Science.

St. Francis de Sales's *Introduction to a Devout Life*, composed in 1618, has remained to this day one of the most popular books among students of the life of prayer. In this book he suggests a method of meditation which lends itself to use by others than Catholics, as may be seen from the following adaptation prepared by a Protestant teacher for the use of his students:

First Step—Preparation.

Let the imagination be active.

Place yourself in the presence of God.

Affirm that since God is everywhere, he is now here; and you are in the very atmosphere of His nearness, like a flying bird in the air.

Think of Christ, "whom not having seen ye love," as now in this chapel sharing your experience, although unseen, as once He lived with men.

Offer a brief prayer of confession and petition, imploring guidance in the moments of meditation to follow.

Propose a subject, making it as specific and vivid as possible. Imagine it as connected with some definite action or part of your experience.

Second Step—Consideration.

Let the mental powers be active.

Entertain all possible considerations of the subject proposed, in order to make it clear and convincing to the mind. Seek solid reasons for the proposition, assured that the religious life may be based on facts and logical conclusions.

Go from point to point in the consideration without hurry or fatigue. Proceed only so far as time and a composed mind will permit.

Third Step—Resolution

Let the feelings and the will be active.

The reasons reached in the consideration should stimulate the affections, since we must love better what is more fully known.

Reduce general considerations, thus warmed by the emotions, to the form of definite duties to be presented to the will for acceptance.

Resolve firmly and reverently, "I will now undertake to build up my life upon that which I have considered and which has been clarified in my meditation."

Fourth Step—Conclusion.

Offer a prayer of thanksgiving for the new truth discerned and the new resolution registered.

Offer a prayer of consecration to the practical duties and the enlarged life involved in the resolution.

Offer a prayer for grace and strength to keep steadfastly in the way of duty until the resolution is fully carried out.

Then, as one who has been walking in a garden of flowers gathers a few to take with him, select a truth or an impression and carry it in memory for the day.



A PLAN FOR THE WEEK

The foregoing scheme may at first seem too elaborate and more confusing than helpful. Let us consider some simpler arrangements devised by Ronald Sinclair, after the pattern suggested by Studdert Kennedy.

NOTE.—These suggestions are not meant to be used as they stand. It is recommended that the reader should make his own Scheme of Prayer in a note-book. A fortnightly scheme can, of course, be drawn up equally well. Moreover, there are many subjects other than those given

here—each with its corresponding Gospel picture—which can be chosen.

Other examples, for instance, might be:

<i>Subject:</i>	<i>Picture:</i>
The Church .	The Vine and the Branches, St. John xv.
Education .	Christ as the Teacher.
Missions .	Christ sending forth His disciples.

MONDAY

Subject: CHILD LIFE.

- I. ENTER INTO THE SILENT PLACE.
- II. SHUT THE DOOR.
- III. PICTURES :
 - (1) The child Jesus;
 - or (2) Jesus blessing the children;
 - or (3) The child set in the midst of the disciples.
- IV. ADORATION :

God as revealed by Christ in the Picture.

THANKSGIVING :

For His childhood;

For the value He puts on child life;

For child life, etc., etc.
- V. INTERCESSIONS :

Bring to Him—

 - (1) Babies;
 - (2) School children;
 - (3) Sick children;
 - (4) Unwanted children;
 - (5) Ill-treated children;
 - (6) Heathen children;
 - (7) All who have charge of children, etc.

VI. PERSONAL INTERCESSIONS:

e.g., Children we know and love intimately.

TUESDAY

Subject: THE KINGDOM OF GOD

(In relation to Nations).

- I. ENTER INTO THE SILENT PLACE.
- II. SHUT THE DOOR.
- III. PICTURES :
 - (1) The Good Shepherd;
 - or (2) The contrast between Jesus and Pilate.
 - or (3) The Temptation of Jesus (to adopt worldly standards and worldly methods) in the wilderness.

IV. ADORATION :

Worship Him as the true picture of Kingship.

THANKSGIVING :

For the ever-increasing signs of the coming of His Kingdom in growing desire for World unity;
For the overseas work of the Church.

V. INTERCESSIONS :

Bring to Him—

- (1) All Statesmen;
- (2) All who influence public opinion by word or pen (e.g., writers);
- (3) Those who bear responsibility without reference to Him;
- (4) Those who openly reject the ideals of Christ, etc., etc.

VI. PERSONAL INTERCESSIONS.

WEDNESDAY

Subject: WORK.

- I. ENTER INTO THE SILENT PLACE.

II. SHUT THE DOOR.

III. PICTURES :

- (1) Jesus the Carpenter;
- or (2) Jesus talking to fishermen;
- or (3) Jesus in a workshop to-day;
- or (4) Jesus as Teacher.

IV. ADORATION :

Christ as Worker.

THANKSGIVING :

e.g., For His being "God with us";
 For His perfect craftsmanship;
 For our own work.

V. INTERCESSIONS :

Bring to Him—

- (1) Those who labour with their hands;
- (2) Those who labour with their brains;
- (3) Masters;
- (4) Employers;
- (5) Women workers;
- (6) Those whose work is dangerous or underpaid;
- (7) Those who have no work, etc., etc.

VI. PERSONAL INTERCESSIONS.

THURSDAY

Subject: HOME LIFE.

I. ENTER INTO THE SILENT PLACE.

II. SHUT THE DOOR.

III. PICTURES :

- (1) The home at Nazareth;
- or (2) The home of Martha, Mary and Lazarus.

IV. ADORATION :

The Father, from whom all fatherhood is derived.

THANKSGIVING :

For our parents;
 For Christian homes;
 For human love.

V. INTERCESSIONS :

Bring to Him—

- (1) All who bear the Name of God: "Father";
- (2) Wives and Mothers;
- (3) Brothers and Sisters;
- (4) Those who live in bad homes;
- (5) Unhappy homes;
- (6) The homeless, etc., etc.

VI. PERSONAL INTERCESSIONS :

Our own family and home life.

FRIDAY

Subject: SINNERS.

I. ENTER INTO THE SILENT PLACE.

II. SHUT THE DOOR.

III. PICTURES :

- (1) The Passion of Our Lord;
- or (2) "The Friend of Publicans and Sinners"
 (many episodes);
- or (3) The Parable of "The Prodigal Son."

IV. ADORATION :

The Divine Compassion for sinners,

THANKSGIVING :

e.g., For His Love;
 For His forgiveness;
 For His compassion,

V. INTERCESSIONS:

Bring to Him—

- (1) Open sinners;
- (2) "Respectable" sinners;
- (3) Those who tempt others to sin;
- (4) Those "who know not what they do";
- (5) Those in despair;
- (6) Self, etc., etc.

VI. PERSONAL INTERCESSIONS:

Individuals.

SATURDAY

Subject: THE SICK; THE SUFFERING; THE DYING.

I. ENTER INTO THE SILENT PLACE.

II. SHUT THE DOOR.

III. PICTURES:

- (1) Jesus, the Healer (many examples);
- or (2) The Risen Christ: Victor over all.

IV. ADORATION:

God's power shown in the Victorious Christ.

THANKSGIVING:

For His Power;

For His Victory;

For a sharing of His Victory.

V. INTERCESSIONS:

Bring to Him—

- (1) All sick persons;
- (2) Those in great pain;
- (3) The dying;
- (4) The sick in mind;
- (5) Those who are bereaved, lonely, unwanted;
- (6) Those in great poverty;
- (7) Those who minister to sufferers.

VI. PERSONAL INTERCESSIONS:

Individual sick cases we know of.

PRAY WITHOUT CEASING

Lest our consideration of method should make prayer seem an esoteric practice, let us hearken again to Brother Lawrence as he points out that whilst forms are useful, prayer itself is a continual attitude towards life.

God requires no great matters of us; a little remembrance of Him from time to time, a little adoration: sometimes to pray for His grace, sometimes to offer Him your sufferings, and sometimes to return Him thanks for the favours He has given you, and still gives you, in the midst of your troubles, and to console yourself with Him the oftenest you can. Lift up your heart to Him, sometimes even at your meals, and when you are in company: the least little remembrance will always be acceptable to Him. You need not cry very loud; He is nearer to us than we are aware of.

It is not necessary for being with God to be always at church; we may make an oratory of our heart, wherein to retire from time to time, to converse with Him in meekness, humility, and love. Everyone is capable of such familiar conversation with God, some more, some less: He knows what we can do. Let us begin then; perhaps He expects but one generous resolution on our part. Have courage. We have but little time to live; you are near sixty-four, and I am almost eighty. Let us live and die with God: sufferings will be sweet and pleasant to us, while we are with Him: and the greatest pleasures will be, without Him, a cruel punishment to us. May He be blessed for all. Amen.

Use yourself then by degrees thus to worship Him, to beg His grace, to offer Him your heart from time to time, in the midst of your business, even every moment if you can. Do not always scrupulously confine yourself to certain rules, or particular forms of devotion; but act with a general confidence in God, with love and humility.

CHAPTER TWELVE

DISCIPLINE IN PRAYER

ONE of the commonest errors in prayer is to judge the reality and value of our communion with God by our feelings. The danger of this is that when our emotional apprehension of God is weak we are tempted to abandon prayer, whereas it may well be that at such times our need of prayer is greatest. In any case to judge the value of prayer by our feelings is to be self-centred in our devotion, and, as the late Studdert Kennedy said, to want a religion of sugar and sweet cakes. Our emotions are very mutable, and at the mercy of countless influences, and if our religious life is to have any reality we can no more allow its engagements to be ruled by our feelings, than we can allow our ordinary engagements in life to be left dependent upon our feelings.

For many people there is a more or less regular alternation and lack of it in their religious life. Thus Dean Inge has written: "The principle of alternation seems to be a law of all life, and in religious feeling too, day and night, summer and winter, follow each other. Thus the rapturous ecstasy and the dark night of the soul are only the most violent manifestations of a tendency to alternate warmth and coldness in devotion; the knowledge that it is so may comfort some who find the oscillations unaccountable and distressing."

Such knowledge must not only comfort us, but must strengthen and nerve us to persist in our engagements with God even though they bring us little immediate joy. All the great masters of prayer have insisted that at such times God is bringing us beyond a religion of enjoyment to greater spiritual heights; and that although the atmos-

phere is rarer, we shall ultimately find if we persist that our vision is wider and our joy deepened.

On the spot where Captain Scott and his gallant band met their death a cross has been erected bearing the words, "To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield." Such steadfast endurance must be our resolve in our religious life. "God laughs," said Abraham Cowley, "at the man who says to his soul, 'Take thy ease.'" For our help and encouragement, then, we will listen to "comfortable words" about the sterner side of prayer, and the discipline of the soul that it demands.



THE WAY OF STILLNESS

Several of the writers on method in prayer stressed the need for silence as a preparation for prayer, and in order that we may hearken to God. Such silence or "stillness" must not be thought of as mere inactivity. On the contrary it calls for strong spiritual discipline; and in this wise and lovely passage from The Religion of Youth Melville Channing Pearce tells of the way of stillness in prayer.

Here and there among the recorded words of men, and especially among the Bibles of the world which some indwelling wisdom has made holy, are to be found sayings which speak with their own authority and need no further justification from men. When we hear them we do not ask if they are true; we know quite surely that they are true with an instinctive certainty that is beyond dispute. In their presence disputation is an impiety and argument is vain. An oracle speaks; it is for us to interpret the "dark saying" if we can.

Such sayings burn with their own clear and unflickering flame, kindled from one knows not what far altar beyond our world. They are always gnomic, paradoxical and, gauged by the little measures of our usual thinking, at first

sight absurd and impossible; their wisdom runs clean contrary to all our worldly sagacity and experience. As Pascal said, the wisdom they utter is "contrary to reason."

But there is no limit to the significance of such sayings when we search below their surface; however deep we may dive in those still dark waters there is a yet further depth beyond our reach. They come with no trumpets or trappings of fine language; they come when least we look for them, and often when least we should expect them, like the "wind which bloweth where it listeth." They are so simple, so transparent, like clear water, that it is easy to pass them by with eyes blind to their beauty and significance. But if you will look steadily upon them you cannot fail to perceive that their every syllable is inevitable and unchangeable and right, that they are like runes written upon a rock of ages.

You will see too, I think, that they seem as though set in a strange and unearthly stillness. It is a stillness which he who has eyes to see may behold shining like an aureole about the rare and classic excellences of art which man has enshrined, beyond impious praise or dispraise, in the Pantheon of the race, an immortal calm crowning with an equal and unassailable sovereignty, the serene sadness of the Demeter of Cnidos in the British Museum, some brooding angel of Leonardo da Vinci's, or the starry and unearthly music with which Shakespeare laid down his art in the *Tempest*.

Such "dark sayings" are so rare that if from all the world and all the ages they were to be gathered into a Golden Book I think that book would be a very slender volume. It would certainly be a very precious one, and, what seems to me to be the one indefeasible title of Jesus to our worship, I think that it would consist largely though not exclusively of His sayings.

Not exclusively! There is at least one saying attributed to King David which would find its place between those

covers: "Be still and know that I am God." That saying has all these qualities. It speaks with authority; we may not fully comprehend it, but we do not need to be told that it is true. It is so simple that a child can understand it, yet so profound that no man can fully fathom its meaning. It is strange and contrary to all our usual ways of thought and experience for which knowledge is a guerdon to be won by striving and not by stillness.

It is strange too in the source from which it comes. For if this is David speaking, this was a restless stormy spirit, a troubled, unquiet poet-king who was seldom still. One would have thought that the God of David would have been the "God of battles." But if this saying means anything, and this is plainly the deep heart speaking, it means this, that God is present in life waiting to be known, and that to know Him one must first be still. Not in striving but in stillness is God known. "Be still and know that I am God."

This was no random fancy; that we know; it is the fountain-head of faith. For in the twenty-third Psalm, that most quiet and lovely song of the soul set among blustering battle hymns, the poet has painted a living picture of this God of the stillness whom he knew, the God who "restoreth his soul," who "leadeth him beside the still waters."

"Be still!" How simple and yet how hard a saying! It is a discovery that seems common to all the wise; wherever man has won to wisdom he has heard her voice in the silence; it is not only David who has sought God in the storms of life and found Him at last "beside still waters."

For Elijah, the scourge and thunder of kings, you will remember that God was not in the "great and strong wind," not in the earthquake, not in the fire, but, so strangely and so paradoxically, in the "still small voice." When Elijah heard that, he knew God, and "wrapped his face in his mantle."

In ancient Egypt the God Amon was said to be "the god who cometh to the silent," "the lord of the silent," "the sweet Well for him that thirsteth in the desert . . . closed to him that speaks, but . . . open to him that is silent."

One of the greatest and last of the Greek thinkers said this: "Let the soul of man meditate on the Great Soul . . . in quietness of temper. . . . Quiet must the imprisoning body be for her and the wave of the body's passion; let all things likewise be quiet that lie about her. Quiet let the earth be, quiet the air and the heaven itself pausing the while. Then into that unmoving firmament let her conceive Soul flowing in, poured in like a tide from without, from all sides invading it and filling it with light."

The Quakers knew this so well that they made of silence all their ritual. Their founder, George Fox, said this of the stillness in which he believed God to dwell: "Be still and cool in thy mind and spirit. . . . Be still awhile from thy own thought . . . thou wilt find Him to be a God at hand . . ."

And it is, I think, a happy omen for our thought to-day that one of the most representative of our modern poets, Mr. T. S. Eliot, has come back at long last, and after many wanderings, to this same wisdom with words echoing this ancient cry. "Teach us to sit still," is the burden of the last and greatest of his poems.

You will find too, if you look, that Jesus knew this wisdom well, seeking God ever in the desert, on the hill-tops, in the night, in the stillness.

"Be still and know that I am God"; this is a wisdom so old and so common to all the wise that if we want wisdom (and who does not?) we cannot ignore it. But, like all such "dark sayings," the more we consider it the more it seems to contain; we cannot begin to understand it till we know what it means to "be still."

To "be still"—that sounds so simple a task until we

try to be still, to silence the unceasing stir and bustle of will and thought and feeling which is our normal life. For just to be inactive, to allow sense and mind to move unmastered, achieves, not stillness, but only a more frenzied and ungoverned activity; really to be still demands so strong and so difficult a control that very few can attain to it. It is the reward of a long and strong self-discipline.

Who does not know that who has ever tried, even for a few minutes, to pray or to meditate with a single mind? When we seek to take refuge in such a citadel of inner stillness, at once we find ourselves beset by a host of irrelevant fancies, and if we do not fight for our peace, we soon find we are crying Peace where there is no peace. We may achieve an outer stillness, but unless we have this inner stillness too, it will be filled with the confused noise of our random thoughts and feelings and desires, that irrepressible and noisy herd.

There is an old story of an anchorite who prayed ceaselessly for many years and knew no answer, until at last in desperation he flung one last petulant question at God: "O God, why do you not answer when I call?" he cried, and then fell into a despondent silence. But in that silence the voice of God answered at last: "My son, if you would only cease from talking you would hear what I have to say." It is a story which holds the secret of the barrenness of much of our praying, I believe. Our prayers, like our lives, are so often just a clamour "of words, words, words," in which the "still small voice" of God cannot be heard; if we would practise an inner stillness, a quiet waiting upon God, we should not wait in vain for that voice.

We should not wait in vain. Is not all great art itself the proof of it? For if you will consider any great poem or statue or picture which has achieved that still immortal beauty of which we spoke just now, you will find that the revealer of it has not used his subject, as so many minor artists and poets do, as a mere clothes-horse for his own

thoughts or emotions, but has regarded it quite simply and disinterestedly for what in itself it is and recorded faithfully what he has seen. He has subdued to stillness his own obscuring self and seen his subject for what it is; and then, and only then, has he found and revealed the hidden beauty, which is its own ineffable reward. But he has only done that at the price of a long and austere self-discipline and a difficult self-renunciation. So true it is in all our life that "he that loseth his life shall save it." To be quite detached, to be truly and utterly disinterested, to silence the clamouring voices of self and the noisy claims of mind and heart, this it is "to be still"; in such a stillness alone can we know truth or beauty or God.

It is a very different vision and knowledge of life and of God which we should find, I think, if we could win to that inner stillness; for then we should see, not what we want to see or think we ought to see, but what really is. Being still, we should know the God that is rather than the God that we suppose or desire.

What such a vision of God may be has never been more kindly suggested than by St. Augustine in his story of how he and Monica, his dying mother, won to that stillness and that knowledge of God one quiet evening hundreds of years ago at Ostia. "The day now approaching when she was to depart this life . . . she and I stood alone, leaning on the garden of the house where we lodged at Ostia. . . . And we began to say, If to any the tumult of the flesh were hushed; hushed the images of earth, of waters and of air; hushed also the poles of heaven; yea, were the very soul to be hushed to herself, and by not thinking on self to surmount self; hushed all dreams and imaginary revelations, every tongue and every sign; if all transitory things were hushed utterly—for to him that heareth they do all speak, saying 'we made not ourselves, but He made us, who abideth for ever'; if, when their speech had gone out they should suddenly hold their

peace and to the ear which they had aroused to their Maker, He Himself should speak, alone, not by them, but by Himself, so that we should hear His word, not through any tongue of flesh, nor Angel's voice, nor echo of thunder, nor in the dark riddle of a similitude, but might hear indeed Him, whom in these things we love, Himself without these—as we but now with effort and in swift thought touched on that eternal Wisdom, which abideth over all; could this be continued, and all disturbing visions of whatever else be withdrawn, and this one ravish and absorb, and wrap up its beholder amid these inward joys, so that life might ever be like that one moment of understanding, which but now we sigh after; were not this *ENTER THOU INTO THE JOY OF THY LORD?* ”

Such is the knowledge of God which is the reward of learning to “be still.” Surely it is worth the having and the labour of the lesson. It is not an easy lesson; but when we have learnt it I think we shall have in our hearts the key to the problem of our uneasy life, and shall have learned how we may best know God. And that is the only knowledge which really matters in the end, is it not? It is the knowledge to which all real religion leads. It is the knowledge to which the poet of the Psalms showed the way in this “dark saying,” upon which I do not think we can ever ponder enough if we seek beauty or wisdom or God. “Be still and know that I am God.”

*

ALL LIFE MUST BE A PREPARATION

Prayer is never a substitute for thought; on the contrary, our thought is both part of our prayer and a preparation for our communion with God. In this passage from the pen of the great and wise Baron von Hügel we have a summary of what is the age-long Christian experience and conviction about the necessary mental and bodily

discipline if prayer is to become powerful in our lives. It is taken from the Baron's Essays and Addresses on the Philosophy of Religion, second series.

I

The decisive preparation for prayer lies not in the prayer itself, but in the life prior to the prayer. That is, distractions and dryness, indeed even the real fruitlessness in and of our prayer, spring largely from our faulty dispositions, doings and driftings when out of prayer. The effects of such faultinesses pursue us when we come to pray. The cure for such faults committed out of prayer, and for their effects upon and within prayer, lies in the very wise ordering, and in the very faithful execution of such ordering, of our active life.

Fénelon pointed out to the Duc de Chevreuse how overburdened, and how racketed and distracted was the Duke's life, outside of his direct and deliberate praying; and how greatly that over-burdenedness, when out of prayer, damaged his recollection when in prayer. Fénelon advised the Duke to begin his day with quietly running through in his mind the chief things he would probably have to do, or would probably be solicited to do, during that coming day. That he should then and there reduce the number of such things as much as was wisely possible. And that, when he came to the actual doing of these things, he should clip his action of all unnecessary detail and development. *In this way he would succeed in placing each action within a circumambient air of leisure—of leisure for the spirit of prayer and peace.* This would be like the ordering of a wise gardener, who carefully sees to it that the young trees he plants have sufficient spaces each from the other—have sufficient air in which to grow and expand. I have myself greatly profited by striving to practise this advice,

St. Catherine of Genoa's method of life has also helped me much. She would quietly concentrate, each moment, upon that moment's special content—upon God's gift and will of special suffering or joy, of determination, effort, decision and the like, conveyed within that moment. Such a scheme follows out something similar, within the spiritual life, to the action of the sun upon the sun-dial in physical life. The sun successively touches and illumines this, and then that, and then the next radius of the dial. Or, again, the scheme reminds one of Goethe's old mother, Frau Rath, who, when one day an acquaintance, ignorant of Frau Rath's condition, called at her door and asked to see her, sent down a message to the visitor that "Frau Rath was busy dying." Indeed, a genial, quiet death to self lies in every minute, when the minute is thus taken separately as the dear will and the direct vehicle of God.

2

The ceaseless interdependence of Soul and Body. The more any state of soul—any *psychosis*—is mental, still more is spiritual, or at least the more the agent or patient feels the *psychosis* to be thus mental or spiritual, the less, as a rule, is the neural accompaniment, the neural limitation, and the neural cost of this state perceived at the time by the experiencing soul. Yet such accompaniment, limitation and cost are certainly present, even in the most genuine and highest of man's spiritual actions or states; indeed, the neural cost appears, roughly, to rise in proportion as the action, at the time, fails to bring with it any sense of cost at all.

Fénelon is admirably awake to this important fact, when he warns Madame de Montberon not to indulge, beyond a certain limited time, in the prayer of quiet—a prayer which greatly helped and refreshed her; and this because of the neural cost of such effortless-seeming prayer.

One quite general, yet very helpful preparation towards the practice of sobriety in prayer, and hence towards escaping, as far as possible, the acute reactions liable to follow upon such very delightful prayer, is admirably preached and practised by Jean Nicholas Grou. This fine classical scholar, and deeply spiritual writer and leader of souls, urges the *importance of the soul's possession and cultivation of two levels and kinds of action and interest*—a wholesome natural interest and action, and a deep supernatural interest and action. The soul will then possess and will cultivate a genuine interest in politics or economics, in language or history, in natural science or philosophy—in these, as part of its bread-winning or as quite freely chosen studies. And we will thus, when in dryness and even in anticipation of it, possess a most useful range of interest to which to turn, as our disporting ground, in relief of the dreariness or the strain of our directly religious life. I believe Grou's spiritual writings remain so fresh, because (given his spiritual experience) he never, as he tells us himself, wrote on religious subjects except when the spiritual light and fervour were within him; whilst at other—the far more frequent—times he translated Plato or emended the texts of Livy and Horace.

Some further hints towards the bearing and the utilization of desolation, as part and parcel of every at all religious life, and of every at all complete self-knowledge possessed by the liver of such a life. Thus St. Teresa, especially in her Autobiography, gives us admirably vivid descriptions of her times of dryness. On the other hand, I was surprised and disappointed when, some fifteen months ago, that deeply sincere Indian convert, the Sadhu Sundar Singh, told me that, never since his conversion thirteen years before, had he ever suffered one moment of spiritual dryness. I believe, with a very experienced psychologist and philosopher friend of mine, that this opinion indicates a strange lack of self-knowledge, perhaps also of

what is precisely meant by such dryness, on the part of this devoted Christian. If, then, spiritual dryness is indeed inevitable in the life of prayer, we will be much helped to bear these desert stretches, by persistent recognition—hence also, indeed especially, in our times of fervour—of the normality and the necessity of such desolation. We will thus come to treat desolation in religion as we treat the recurrence of the night within every twenty-four hours of our physical existence; or as bodily weariness at the end of any protracted exertion in our psychic life. When desolation is actually upon us, we will quietly modify, as far as need be, the kind and the amount of our prayer—back, say, from prayer of quiet to ordinary meditation, or to vocal prayer—even to but a few uttered aspirations. And, if the desolation is more acute, we will act somewhat like the Arab caravans behave in the face of a blinding sand-storm in the desert. The men dismount, throw themselves upon their faces in the sand, and there they remain, patient and uncomplaining, till the storm passes, and until, with their wonted patient endurance, they can and do continue on their way.

There are generally a weakness and an error at work within us, at such times, which considerably prolong the trouble, and largely neutralize the growth this very trouble would otherwise bring to our souls. The weakness lies in that we let our imagination and sensitiveness be directly absorbed in our trouble. We contemplate, and further enlarge, the trouble present in ourselves, instead of firmly and faithfully looking away, either at the great abiding realities of the spiritual world, or, if this is momentarily impossible for us, at some other, natural or human, wholesome fact or law. And the error lies in our lurking suspicions that, for such trials to purify us, we must feel them fully in their tryingness—that is, we must face and fathom them directly and completely. Such a view completely overlooks the fact that such trials are sent us for

the purpose of deoccupying us with our smaller selves; and, again, it ignores the experience of God's saints across the ages, that, precisely in proportion as we can get away from direct occupation with our troubles to the thought and love of God, to the presence of Him who permits all this, in the same proportion do and will these trials purify our souls.

3

The great difference, in spiritual range and depth, in special *attrait* and peculiar calls and gifts, *unchangeably inherent in each soul's vocation to what it is, and still more to what God would have it become*. True, certain differences, perceptible on the surface, between soul and soul, largely spring from some changeable causes or defects. And again, at the opposite end, the ultimate limitations as well as the possible final calls of individual souls are completely known to God alone, and to the soul itself, with some real knowledge, only and when it has advanced considerably on the spiritual way. Still, even the soul which is but a beginner can, with a little reflection and some good advice, save itself either much unnecessary failure, or, again, much vagueness and superficiality of endeavour, if it sorts out, roughly and for practical purposes, those acts, habits, intentions, self-conquests, etc., which specially appeal to it in its deepest, most peaceful moments, or which are specially called for by its particular character in the peculiar circumstances of its life and call: if it fixes upon *these* dispositions and virtues, and makes *these* things the central objects of its prayers and endeavours. It will work at these things—at least for a while—on a relatively wide and deep scale, and, as to the other virtues and dispositions, it will be content with not completely neglecting them. If we are faithful and humble in this concentration and cultivation, we shall come to discover any serious mistakes we may have made in our original choice, and we can then

correspondingly widen, or narrow, or shift, the field, or alter the methods of our operations.

All this directly concerns our prayer also. For all such choosing of the field of our spiritual self-cultivation, all our labours in this field, all our little successes, many failures, and long awaitings of *some* fruit: all this should be *saturated with prayer*—by the spirit of prayer and by definite prayer, vocal, mental or of quiet. And, again, these several kinds of prayer, or combinations of kinds: these too, of course, should be chosen with due care and circumspection, according, again, to the *attrait*, the need, and the experience of the particular soul, which, however, must never be allowed to eliminate all vocal prayer.

Bishop Creighton wrote a fine letter, given in his *Life*, on the wonderfully rich variety which characterized the spiritual life of the Mediæval Church at its best; and, indeed, such varieties continue to flourish in the Roman Catholic Church. When Frederick William Faber preached the panegyric of St. Ignatius Loyola, on the occasion of the Feast of the Founder of the Jesuits, in the Jesuit church at Farm Street, he spent an hour in unbroken, sympathetic, indeed fervent, exposition of this saint's spirituality, and only in his last sentence did he introduce the necessary limitation and expansion: "This, then, my dear brethren, is St. Ignatius's way to heaven; and, thank God, it is not the only way!"

A friend of mine, who loved her garden, told me how only one of the many gardeners employed by her had succeeded with every one of her roses. She asked him what was the secret of his success. He told her that the other gardeners treated all her roses, not unwisely, but too generally—they treated them all in precisely the same way; whereas he himself watched across the months each rose-bush separately, and followed out, for each plant, that plant's special *attrait* as to soil, manure, sun, air, water, support, shelter and the like. So with souls: let us, with-

out undue self-occupation, learn to discriminate between them and, again, between them all and ourselves, so as both to respect and encourage *their* ways, however different from our own, and to persevere and improve in *our* ways, however lonely these ways may be.

4

The Incarnational side of religion may never be despised nor forgotten, but must always be assigned some definite place and power within our spiritual lives. The approach to God and the condescension of God, the Invisible, Pure Spirit, on occasion of, in, and with the Sensible and Visible—the Historical, Traditional, Social, Sacramental—must remain and be cultivated within our souls.

The fact is that Pure Mysticism is but Pantheism; and that Pantheism is, on principle and incurably, a non-moral, a supra-moral and a non-personalist position, within which there is really no place for a distinct and definite God, for Sin, for Contrition, for the sense of our being creatures, and for Adoration. All attempts to interpret the whole life and teaching of Jesus, as simply the supreme unfolding of Pure Mysticism, suffer shipwreck against the great convictions which colour all the words and deeds of Jesus, that the consummation is indeed proximate, but not present; that its beginnings can indeed already be seen, but not its fulfilment; and that even these beginnings, and still more the fulfilment, are the deed of God, the immensely Personalist Power, and not the work of mankind, still less just the operation of the world-whole. The supreme revelation of the omnipresent, non-successive God, took place, in unique fashion and degree, in such and such years, and months and days and hours, and in such and such places of human history. And so, similarly, with His lesser, yet still real, self-communications.

Now there is no doubt that *the prayer of quiet*—that

a certain formless recollection and loving feeding upon the sense and presence of God—of God, as here and now—is a most legitimate prayer. Indeed, for the souls which possess the call to, and capacity for, such prayer (and their number is, I believe, not so very small), this form of prayer will feed and fortify their spirit more than would, *at the times when such prayer can healthily operate*, any number of vocal prayers, formal meditations, or Church services. Nevertheless—and this is our present special point—such prayer of quiet will remain safe and wholesome only if *some* daily vocal prayers, and *some* more or less frequent Church attendances and sacramental acts and receptions, continue active within this same soul's life. I know well that such sensible and spiritual practices will, to such a soul, bring with them, at least at their beginnings, a feeling of incongruity, of oppression, of contraction, sometimes only dull, but at other times very acute. Yet every such initial discomfort, if only the sensible-spiritual acts be chosen with reasonable reference to this soul's special call, and if these acts be bravely faced and persevered in, will (if not promptly, at least in the long run) be followed by an increase, very real, and mostly also clearly perceived, of the substantiality, and of humble, childlike quality in the prayer of quiet, and in the entire character of this same soul.

Let me illustrate what I mean from my own direct experience. After practising a daily three-point meditation for some twenty-five years, the new Helper sent me by God advised me that my prayer should now be mainly informal—more of the prayer of quiet type; but that there should always remain short vocal prayers morning and night, Mass and Holy Communion twice a week, with Confession once a week or once a fortnight; and (perhaps most characteristic point of all) one decade of the rosary every day—this especially to help prevent my interior life from losing touch with the devotion of the people. After over thirty years

of this mixed *régime*, I am profoundly convinced of the penetrating sagacity of this advice.

Let me, then, suggest that we should each of us discover, with sufficient detail, what is the form of prayer to which God appears to call us; let us give ample room and opportunity to this particular form; but let us also organize, most carefully, a certain regular amount of the other kinds of prayer and worship.

5

The right attitude towards the Sex-instinct, and as to what is, for the Christian, the sin of sins.

Original Sin was generally considered by Catholic Christians, up to the advent of the great Jesuit theologians, as a *stain*, a vicious habit present within human souls from the moment of their conception and birth into this earthly life. And especially St. Augustine, following and still further accentuating the attitude of St. Paul, found this vicious habit to lie centrally in the vehemence of the sex-instinct. Not even St. Augustine dared censure the sex-instinct as such; as a Catholic Christian, he could not cast a slur upon marriage in its essentials. He declared a moderate, readily controllable sex-instinct to be right; only the vehemence, such as now characterizes this instinct, was evil and part of original sin.

But the great Jesuit theologians found even this much to be untenable: how could an instinct, without which men would certainly not face the grave burdens of bringing dependent families into the world, be too strong, if we grant that the perpetuation of the human race really matters? So these Jesuit theologians placed the evil, not in the instinct, nor even in the vehemence of the instinct, but simply in the weakness of the reason and of the will called upon to control and moderate that vehemence.

Certain difficulties attach also to this view. Yet this view is satisfactory in that it removes all grounds for pains

of conscience as to the presence of the sex-instinct, however strong this sex-instinct may be (apart, of course, from such strength as it may possess owing to the bad or slack life led by the soul which thus experiences the instinct).

Now I believe it to be of great importance that we should realize, vividly and persistently, that human purity is not only consistent with the presence of this instinct, but, at bottom, requires it. There doubtless can exist creatures of God without such an instinct. But man ceases to be human, unpossessed of such an instinct. Human purity is thus essentially a virtue operating within the body—a fleshly virtue.

Yet Mr. F. R. Tennant's books, so wholesomely suggestive on this point, should suffice to warn us how easily we can be led on to think of the body as ultimately the occasion of *all* our sins, as well as of our virtues; or, at least, to make impurity be, in our minds, *the* sin, the type and measure of all sin. For, with Tennant, *all* sin is but an *atavism*, a lapse back into the animalism from out of which mankind has raised itself. Impurity is a direct atavism—a gross, simple atavism, whilst *pride* is an indirect atavism—a subtilized, compound animalism. But this, I do not doubt, is a strangely inadequate view, both as to the sheer facts and as to the specifically Christian position. For the facts readily show that the occasions, the effects and the reactions of our consciousness with regard to Impurity, are all different from the occasions, the effects and the reactions of Pride. It is very distinctly *not* the animal within us which leads us to pride and self-sufficiency, whereas it is, quite as distinctly, the animal within us which does lead us to sloth, gluttony and impurity.

And as to the Christian outlook, its genius is sensitively keen and final concerning which is the central, the most heinous sin. *The central sin, for the Christian, is Pride and Self-sufficiency*, distinctly more so than Impurity and Sloth.

I take the occasion, the very possibility of such pride and self-sufficiency, to spring, not from the body at all, but from the delicate poise of our imperfect freedom. We possess a real, but only partial independence; we own a limited power and a limited self-determinative freedom, and even these our fundamental qualities we owe, not to our own making or finding, but we hold them as gifts, as creations of God. The very deep doctrine of the Fall of the Angels grandly illustrates this position. The Angels are without bodies; yet this does not lift them above probation, but merely makes their testing a testing in Humility instead of Purity. And, again, this absence of bodies does not make the alternatives or the Fall of these Angels to be less. On the contrary, it makes them greater.

I can only say that these two convictions, as to the nature of human Purity, and as to the rank of Humility amongst the virtues of all the creatures of God, have greatly helped my prayer. For the conviction as to Purity has freed me from much previous scruple and depression; and the conviction as to Humility has, I feel, anchored me more deeply and more securely in the Christian Ideal, in the Christian life, and in the rich Christian fact—the life and spirit of Jesus Christ, Our Lord.

6

A right attitude towards Temptation and towards Sin. Such an attitude springs from two vivid perceptions: a keen sense of the difference between Perfect Liberty, as we found it to characterize God, and Imperfect Liberty, as it exists in man and, indeed, doubtless in all the higher and highest creatures of God; and an equally keen sense of how all-penetrating and all-characterizing is, for man, the effect of this his Imperfect Liberty. The first sense, as to the Imperfection of our Liberty, will save us, as we have seen, from all pride, not only in our perhaps actually

being some kind of Byron or Don Juan, but even in our ability thus to fall away from what we should be. And the second sense, as to the special character conferred upon all our moral and spiritual life by this our betwixt and between position of Imperfect Freedom, will keep us awake to the fact that, for our special human kind and degree of virtue, Temptation is indeed necessary, in the long run and upon the whole, for the perfecting and testing of our moral and spiritual life. Temptation—Temptation to sin—is necessary; but not the Commission of sin, not sin itself. Both these facts find their supreme illustration in the earthly life of Jesus. His Sinlessness—the unquestioning conviction of His sinlessness—appears in the oldest documents, but also His Temptedness. This temptedness disappears already in the Fourth Gospel. Yet the Synoptic Gospels (especially St. Luke), and the Epistle to the Hebrews, give varied and quite unforced expression to the reality of these temptations and to the primitiveness of the belief in their reality. We thus secure the text: “He was tempted like unto ourselves in all points, yet without sin.” This, for the Humanity even of Jesus Christ. And we affirm the doctrine “without Sin, without Temptation, without Suffering”—this, for God—indeed even for the Divinity of Jesus Christ. “Credo in Deum Impassibilem,” declared the Council of Aquileia.

I wish we could all vividly realize how all grave sin, actually committed by us, leaves—at least for and during this our earthly life—scars and limitations upon our souls, even after our most generous penitence. Thus St. Augustine did not simply profit by his sins. They became, indeed, the occasions for a grand humility and for the keenest sense of the mercy of God. He became, in spite of his past sins, a greater saint than is many another saint whose sins were far fewer or far smaller. But Augustine the Sinner, even when he had become Augustine the Penitent, did not surpass, not even equal what—everything else being equal

—would have been Augustine the Innocent. He would then, for instance, not have so closely grazed Gnosticism in his treatment of marriage. So, too, the noble founder of La Trappe, the vehement de Rancé, did not simply profit all round by his former sins, heroically repented of though they were. His aversion to all critical historical work, as part of the lives of monks, is doubtless an excess, and an excess which forms part of the reaction from his former worldly life. Here, too, the model of all models is Jesus Christ Our Lord—Jesus, and not even St. Paul. Our Lord's Humanity really grows and grows "in favour with God and man" amidst real temptation. But Jesus commits no sin; nor is there any trace of a reaction, still less of any excessive reaction, from a sinful life, or, indeed, from any single sin. And this sinlessness does not spell weakness, but the fullest power.

Let us penetrate our prayer with these discriminations, and let us beware of loose thinking about the profitability of sin, which, alas, even great poets such as Robert Browning have, at times, encouraged. I am very sure that, if we keep persistently awake to the contrast between ourselves, the tempted and sinning; and Jesus, the sinless but tempted, and again God, the living Reality beyond all sin and temptation, we shall greatly strengthen and fruitfully articulate our prayer.

7

The Divinely intended End of our Life is Joy overflowing and infinite, a Joy closely connected with a noble asceticism.

There is a wholesome, a strengthening *zest* attached to all action which is right and appropriate for the agent; and there is an unhealthily weakening *excitement*, which accompanies or follows all activity that is wrong or inappropriate. Hence one great end, and one sure test of

right living and right dispositions, is the degree to which such living and dispositions make zest to prevail in our lives and make excitement to disappear from them. Now there is no zest comparable to the zest, the expansion, the joy brought to the soul by God and the soul's close union with Him. True, here below, we require to the end a filial reverence, fear, restraint; virtues which, in the beyond, will continue deepened, in the life of Adoration. True, again, we must never cease to fight Self, to flee from Self. "The love of God, even to the contempt of self," must more and more supplant the "love of self, even to the contempt of God." We never may directly seek mere pleasure. Yet it is also true that we possess, deep within us, a spontaneous affinity for God. Nature draws us to God, as the dim, though most real background and groundwork of our existence; and Supernature raises this semi-conscious affinity to an active hunger for direct and clear vision, for a true participation in the Supernatural Life of God: Hence we must, in our practice, beware of deciding, as to what precisely to think, to do, to be, in execution of God's will for us, directly and simply in favour of what we do not like, or what we like least. We ought, instead, quietly to concentrate our thoughts upon God—upon His will and His various calls, and upon discovering which of such forms and degrees of moral and spiritual life most draws the soul in the moments of its greatest clearness and peacefulness, as to what is somehow meant for it. There will be plenty of opportunities for a large and deep asceticism within the life thus chosen, when we come, as assuredly we will, to have patiently to hold out, and laboriously to advance along the road—a road which, nevertheless, will be *the* road to Peace and to Power for the chooser.

We will not, of course, rule out, for ourselves or for others, the practice, or at least the spirit, also of bodily austerities. The spirit, and even some mild amount of the actual practice, of such austerities is, indeed, an integral

constituent of all virile religion: the man who laughs at the plank bed and the discipline is a shallow fool. Indeed, some souls are, undoubtedly, called to more than the minimum indicated, and only find their full peace and persuasiveness in some such bodily asceticism.

Our prayer will greatly benefit by the great facts and discriminations we have been considering. Without in any way forcing, or escaping from, our real *attrait*, our prayer will thus possess a double virile asceticism. We shall feel ourselves, even if personally not called to very definite or to large bodily mortifications, in spiritual touch with, and supplemented by, those who are; and, again, we will deliberately hold ourselves as pledged to much renunciation of facile pleasures, as the condition and cost of our own abiding Joy.



THE DARK NIGHT OF THE SOUL

Rev. Bede Frost now treats of discipline in life and prayer and of the meaning of the Dark Night of the Soul, and how we should comport ourselves in times of dryness. This passage is taken from his book The Art of Mental Prayer, a great book on method in prayer from the Catholic standpoint.

A slack, undisciplined, unmortified life necessarily leads to a distracted prayer, for not only are we the same persons in prayer as in every other action, but any real attempt at prayer is an endeavour to be more truly ourselves. All day long we go about disguised, to a very large extent hiding our real self that others may not see what we are, and this not seldom to such a degree that the disguise becomes more real to us than our actual self. But when we come to pray, our real self, torn by a myriad interests, our interior mental life, crowded with distractions, surges out into that silent

sanctuary wherein we seek the peace of God. "If we find the door shut, why should we be surprised?"

There is much of evil which those living in the world in our days cannot help but see and hear, but much more that they could avoid seeing and hearing had they the will to do so. With few exceptions—and in these necessary exceptions the grace of God is never lacking—there is no occasion for us to hear and see, still less to say, half the things which, if they do not lead to sin, yet disturb the peace and calm of the soul. "Keep thy tongue from evil" and from that idle speaking to which Our Lord refers so sternly, for talkativeness and all that it leads to are most harmful to the spiritual life. It is too often the mark of a shallow spirit; indeed, it would seem that the less a man thinks—and thinking is fast dying out—the more he talks. "Talking," said Faber, "is a loss of power," and it certainly tends to dissipate that sense of the presence of God which is the greatest guard of the soul. Deliberately to choose to be silent at times, to watch and weigh our words when we speak, would accomplish more for many than the pious practices they so much enjoy.

Another sphere in which custody of the senses is necessary, especially in view of our prayer, is that of concentration in the spirit of St. Catherine of Genoa's "One thing only and one thing at a time." To pray well demands not merely concentration, but a concentration which has nothing forced or violent about it. St. François de Sales never tires of insisting upon the need of calmness and tranquillity in our approach to God. But to have this at our prayer means that we must strive for it outside of our prayer, and one of the greatest aids to this is to learn to do each thing as it comes, as if it were the only thing we had to do, and having done it, or being compelled to leave it to go on to another duty, to do so in the same spirit. So, occupied and fully and calmly concentrated on each duty as it presents itself, repressing all impatience, excitement

and the vain attempt to do or think of half a dozen things at once, we shall come to our prayer in the same spirit, and find ourselves free from a swarm of distractions which are simply due to the lack of any concentration in the rest of our life.

We "live and move and have our being in God," and "this is the work of a perfect man, never to let the mind slacken from attending to heavenly things, and amidst many cares to pass on as it were without care; not after the manner of an indolent person, but by a certain privilege of a detached mind, not cleaving with inordinate affection to anything created" (*Imitation* III. vi. 26).

Mediocre Christians who content themselves with a bare performance of obligations frequently excuse themselves from attempts at further progress on the ground that their manner of life in the world, in itself quite lawful, prevents any such recollection and devotion as à Kempis and all spiritual writers insist on. They should be taught to see, first, in what true devotion consists, for which the early chapters of the *Spiritual Combat* of Scupoli, and of *The Introduction to a Devout Life* by St. François de Sales, and the second part of St. Pedro de Alcantara's *On Prayer and Meditation*, may be consulted; and second, in what exactly recollection consists. The world of affairs is full of men who are intensely recollected because they are intensely interested in some particular aim or project. They do a thousand things a day, but behind all they do, dominating and influencing all their life, is one supreme thing. They are not always actually thinking of it; they may, indeed, and will at times, be thinking of and doing the commonplace things, eating, drinking, playing, that all men do. But always, even if not consciously at the moment, one thing and one alone is supreme and central; for that thing they live; without it, life to them would lose all meaning. They are men of recollection.

And recollection in the spiritual life means precisely

the same thing; it is the spirit of the man who is possessed with the reality of God as the true end of all human life, who knows that he exists "to praise, reverence and serve God, and by this means to save his soul." He is not, any more than his neighbour, possessed with the reality of money or fame, always consciously thinking of God, but he does all for God, sees all in relation to God, seeks God in and through the commonplaces of daily life. For to him God is no mere word, no vague shadow afar off, no mere abstract principle, but the living, personal God who is not only in all things by His Presence, Essence and Power, but in the depths of his own soul, God of his heart and life.

This is no more than elementary Christian truth, yet for most it is but dimly adverted to, and even the practising Christian needs definite means of recalling and preserving the fact of it to himself. Such aids are the practice of making the first act of the day an act of profound adoration of God, in whose Presence we awake. To begin each day by kneeling in silence and uniting ourselves to the unending adoration of Heaven and earth is one of the most useful and influencing practices it is possible to perform.¹

The practice of ejaculatory prayer, of raising our heart and mind to God in acts of adoration, praise and love as we go about the day; the frequent offering of our actions to Him, remembering that the ordinary duties of our state of life are the chief means of our sanctification; the taking of some thought in our mental prayer to recur to during

¹ "The mystery of birth renews itself in every morning . . . this living being becomes a prayer. . . . Do you see how much depends on this first hour of the day? It is its beginning. Man can start at it without any beginning, without thought, without an act of the will—merely slipping into it. Then it is not truly a *day*, but a time of rags and tatters, without mind or face. But a day is a way: it needs direction. A day is a work: it demands definite resolution. A day is your whole life: your whole life is as your day—but that needs a countenance" (Romano Guardini, *Sacred Signs*, p. 82).

the day, St. François's spiritual bouquet, are all efficacious means of keeping ourselves in that spirit of recollection which is one of the great secrets of the Christian life. But the illustration I used above of a similar spirit in men of the world reveals what is most necessary. They are recollected, I said, because they are interested, because something is seen by them as eminently lovable and desirable. There is our need, to see God as supremely lovable and desirable in Himself. The fundamental weakness of Christian life to-day is largely due to the fact that we are more concerned with self than with God, with the question of saving our soul rather than adoring, praising and serving God, with fighting temptations rather than seeking God, a "glory for me" rather than a "glory be to God" religion. We do not think enough, contemplate enough, adore enough, God *in Himself*; our minds are so filled with self that we habitually think of God in relation to ourselves, our needs and desires. But all religion is founded on what God is and ever was and would be had He never uttered the *fiat* of creation. God the Self-Existent, the Eternal, Abiding, Unchanging Reality; who is not the sum total of created perfection, but altogether "other" than creation, differing not in degree but in kind from all the works of His hands. "What art Thou, then, my God? What can I say, but the Lord God? O most high, most good, most powerful, most Almighty, most merciful, yet most just; most hidden, yet most near; most beautiful, yet most strong; stable, yet incomprehensible; unchangeable, yet changing all things; never new, and never old, renewing all things and "making old the proud and they know it not"; ever in action, yet ever at rest; still gathering, yet lacking nothing; supporting, filling and overshadowing all things; creating, nourishing and ripening; seeking, yet knowing all things" (St. Augustine, *Confessions* i. 4).

We need a conversion *to* God, not merely *from* sin; a

realization that we were created "to be for the praise of His glory" (Eph. i. 12); that our first aim should be to "seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Matt. vi. 33).

Aridity or Desolation

By these terms is meant that state of the soul bereft, to a greater or less degree, of any pleasure or consolation in prayer; when there is no "feeling" of the presence of God or of the action of Divine grace; when the mind is devoid of thought, the heart cold and unmoved by spiritual things, and the will without any desire or energy; when we do not want to pray, and, if we force ourselves to do so, find it almost impossible. St. Ignatius defines desolation as "a darkening of the soul, trouble of mind, movement to base and earthly things, restlessness of various agitations and temptations moving to distrust, loss of hope, loss of love; when the soul feels herself thoroughly apathetic, tepid, sad and as it were separated from her Creator and Lord" (*Spiritual Exercises, Fourth Rule for the Discernment of Spirits*). "My heart is dried up, and my soul like a land without water. I cannot shed tears. I find no savour in the Psalms. I have no pleasure in reading good books. Prayer does not recreate me. The door is not open to meditation. I am lazy in my work, sleepy in my watchings, prone to anger, obstinate in my dislikes, free in my tongue, and unrestrained in my appetite." Thus St. Bernard describes a state which every Christian knows in some form or another, a state which may be either a friend or an enemy according to the cause from which it springs, and the way it is received and treated.

Before we come to the causes and remedies of aridity one very necessary lesson has to be learnt—that is, that we shall make little or no progress in the spiritual life until

we are convinced that it is a supernatural life of faith, not a merely superior natural life of sense-impressions, feelings and emotions. To-day large numbers of professing Christians practise a religion which is centred in self and is dependent upon the emotions of the moment. It is entirely pragmatic; worship, prayer, Sacraments, truths, all are judged by the feelings they do or do not evoke in the individual. Sensible devotion and comfort, "uplift," the stirring of surface emotions, are made the test of the truth of a doctrine, the value of a practice or the good of prayer.

All this is as demoralizing as it is unchristian and untrue. "The just shall live by faith," and faith is a habit of the soul which holds on to God in sunshine and dark alike, which puts no trust in feelings, which, whilst it will welcome and use consolation when it is given by God, does not depend on it, nor is to be drawn aside from its upward path when the way grows hard and lonely. For the man of faith seeks not himself or his own satisfaction, nor even the gifts of God, but God Himself for His own sake. He prays with the same regularity and constancy as he breathes, knowing that no felt emotion is required to convince him that his spiritual life depends upon the first as his physical does upon the second.

Aridity is one of the most necessary lessons of the spiritual life, nowhere better elucidated than by St. John of the Cross in the opening chapters of *The Dark Night of the Soul*. He tells that God treats beginners as children who need to be "spiritually nursed and caressed" so that they may be drawn to the practice of prayer and of the virtues, and may "taste and see that the Lord is gracious." But since they are yet weak and imperfect, these very spiritual delights may easily become a danger by their being "drawn to these things and to their spiritual exercises by the comfort and satisfaction they find therein," which leads them to regard them as ends rather than

as means, and to love the gifts more than the Giver. Then God withdraws these consolations, partly because the soul is becoming too centred upon them and they are in danger of becoming sources of pride, vanity, etc., or because He wishes to lead us to a higher state of prayer for which it is necessary that our humility and the sense of our nothingness should be deepened, that we should be more detached, learning not to depend upon sensible impressions, led to a more spiritual appreciation of Divine things, and to a greater desire and more real endeavour to seek God for Himself alone. These consolations are not gone for good, but in order that we may ask why, may realize how much there is yet of self-satisfaction to be got rid of, that we may learn "not to leave the Giver in order to regard and amuse ourselves with His gifts" (St. Jane Chantal, *Œuvres*, Tome III, p. 268). This withdrawal on God's part is not a punishment, though even His punishments are always acts of love, but an invitation to enter that dark night of faith in which the soul is purified and detached from creatures, and so progress through the *Night of Sense* to the *Night of Spirit* in which the soul forsakes all to find God the All. Here are heights we need but know exist, we who are yet in the plains, or, at best, amongst the foothills, but we do need to realize that the greatest part of the journey is yet before us, and that the withdrawal of consolations and the state of dryness which results means that we are on the way, not that we have lost it. There is cause for thankfulness, not for discouragement, for this is the school of the friends and apostles of God.

How, then, are we to behave when we are reasonably conscious that aridity is not due to any at least deliberate fault of our own or to merely natural conditions. We are apt to think that the first thing to do is to discover the cause, but this often leads us into seeking consolation from creatures, and so defeats the end we are aiming at. Actu-

ally, a time of dryness is also a time of darkness in which we are scarcely able to see what is wrong with us, much less to know why, and to throw ourselves into an energetic self-examination will probably do more harm than good. It is necessary to realize that dryness is an ordinary feature in the spiritual life, not an alarming symptom peculiar to ourselves, and that it is always of far greater advantage to the soul than consolation. So we should meet aridity with calmness, patience and confidence in our Lord, who in His own time will show us whence it comes and why. We must go on faithfully with our ordinary exercises even though we *feel* not the slightest benefit from them. "The longing of a loving heart for God and its endurance of unwelcome difficulties is one of the most perfect prayers . . . when we pray we should be as empty vessels before God, into which His grace may be poured drop by drop if He so wills, and we should be as ready to go home with our vessel empty as if it had been filled to the brim" (St. Jane Chantal, *Entretien* xxx). Again she says, "In aridity it is possible to make all the acts of prayer, and if it is without waste or sentiment, it will not be without utility and profit." (R. 515).

There is much of real help in the advice which a Dominican, Fr. Raymond Hocking, gave to young Baron von Hügel. "You want to grow in virtue, to serve God, to love Christ? Well, you will grow in and attain to these things if you will make them a slow and sure, an utterly real, a mountain step-plod and ascent, willing to have to camp for weeks or months in spiritual desolation, darkness and emptiness at different stages in your march and growth" (*Selected Letters*, January 26th, 1919, p. 266). In another letter he writes, "The stress of darkness and dryness . . . peculiarly trying . . . but *irreplaceably profitable*." He goes on to give three examples or "images which have helped me along many a flinty furlong." First, the climbing of a mountain, enveloped in mist for days on

end, in which the mountaineer halts and camps, quietly waiting until it has cleared away. Second, that the spiritual life is like a long sea voyage, for which one must choose some few and appropriate things, selected in view of "dirty" weather. Third, travelling across a desert. On windless days all is well, but when the sirocco blows there is only one thing to do—dismount, lie down in the sand, cover your head and wait until the storm is over. And whatever it be, "whether cloud-mists on the mountain-side, or huge, mountain-high waves on the ocean, or blinding sand-storms in the desert; there is each time one crucial point—to form no conclusions, to take no decisions, to change nothing during such crises and, especially at such times, not to force any particularly religious mood or idea in oneself. To turn gently to other things, to maintain a vague, general attitude of resignation—to be very meek, with oneself and with others; the crisis goes by, thus, with great fruit" (*Selected Letters*, pp. 304-5).

It would be impossible to sum up, in fewer or more incisive words, the whole traditions of the spiritual masters on this matter. Quiet, patient, humble, confident, persevering, waiting upon God, this is the one attitude of the soul in dryness and desolation, wherein we may gain comfort from the thought that, while we may not see or feel any good, God our Lord does see and is glorified, and that some day, by that mercy which is the fount of all He does, we shall see the progress that was made when, to our blinded eyes, we only seemed to be sitting still and wasting our time.



WRESTLING IN PRAYER

The name of Dr. Alexander Whyte of Edinburgh was made famous for multitudes of people by the issue of a selection of his many sermons on prayer under the title of Lord, Teach Us to Pray. In a different literary style indeed,

but with equal earnestness, he insists upon the same truth as the Catholic mystics that prayer is work, and the sternest of all discipline.

Let a long journey then—by land or sea—at one time, be set apart for prayer. A whole day sometimes, a birthday, the anniversary of our engagement to be married, or of our marriage, or again an anniversary of some such matter as Jacob's deception of Esau, or of his flight, or what not. Every man's life is full of "days to be remembered." Then let them be remembered—and with deliberation and resolution and determination; and your life will yet be as well worth writing, and as well worth reading as Jacob's life is. Insist that you are to be left alone sometimes in order that you may take a review of your past life, and at the same time a forecast of coming danger and death: and that will turn all the evil of your past life into positive good: that will take all the danger out of coming danger, and death itself out of fast approaching death. Make experiment: pray with deliberation, and with all proper preparation—and see!

Jacob, we are delighted to see, deliberately and resolutely set apart that whole night to prayer: and his prayer took him that whole night, and until the "breaking of the day." But, to do what? Why did it take Jacob so long to offer his prayer? Was God unwilling to hear Jacob? No, that cannot be the true explanation. God was neither absent nor was He unwilling. God had come down to the Jabbok for this very purpose—to hear and to answer Jacob's prayer, and to preserve Jacob's life from Esau's anger. God was ready to hear and to answer: but Jacob was not yet ready to ask aright. Jacob had twenty years of unbelief and self-forgiveness, and forgetfulness of Esau's injury, and total neglect and want of practice in penitence, and humiliation, and sorrow for sin. Jacob had all that, somehow or other, to undo, and to get over, before his life

could be preserved: and the wonder to me is that Jacob accomplished so much in such a short time. You must all know how hard it is to put yourself into your injured brother's place, and how long it takes you to do it. It is very hard for you to see, and to confess that God is no respecter of persons. It is a terrible shock to you to be told—shall not the Judge of all the earth do right between you and your injured brother? You know how hard, how cruel, it is to see yourself as others see you, and judge you: especially as those see you and judge you who have been hurt by you. It is like death and hell pulling your body and your soul to pieces to take to heart all your sin against your neighbour, as *He* takes it to *His* heart. And that is why Jacob at the Jabbok has such a large place in your Bible: because, what you have taken so many years to do, Jacob did at the Jabbok in as many hours. You surely all understand, and will not forget, what exactly it was that Jacob did beside that angry brook that night? The evening sun set on Jacob sophisticating, and plotting, and planning how he could soften and bribe back to silence, if not to brotherly love, his powerful enemy, Esau; but before the morning sun rose on Peniel, Jacob was at God's feet—aye, and at Esau's feet also—a broken-hearted, absolutely surrendered, absolutely silent and submissive penitent. "In whose spirit there is no guile . . . I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. . . . For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him."

But Jacob at the Jabbok always calls up our Lord in Gethsemane. Now, why did our Lord need to spend so much of that Passover night alone in prayer? and in such an agony of prayer, even unto blood? He did not have the sins of His youth coming back on Him in the garden: nor did He have twenty years of neglect of God, and man,

to get over. No. It was not that. But it was this. I speak it not of commandment, but by permission. It may have been this. I believe it was this. *This*. Human nature, at its best, in this life, is still so far from God—even after it has been redeemed, and renewed, and sanctified, and put under the power of the Holy Ghost for a lifetime—that, to reduce it absolutely down to its very last submission, and its very last surrender, and its very last obedience, the very Son of God, Himself, had to drag His human heart to God's feet, with all His might, and till His sweat was blood, with the awful agony of it. "I have neglected Thee, O God, but I will enter into my own heart," cries Lancelot Andrewes, "I will come to Thee in the innermost marrow of my soul." "It is true prayer, it is importunate, persevering and agonizing prayer that deciphers the hypocrite," says Jonathan Edwards, repeating Job. "My uncle," says Coleridge's nephew, "when I was sitting by his bedside, very solemnly declared to me his conviction on this subject. 'Prayer,' he said, 'is the very highest energy of which the human heart is capable': prayer, that is, with the total concentration of all the faculties. And the great mass of worldly men, and learned men, he pronounced absolutely incapable of prayer. 'To pray,' he said, 'to pray as God would have us pray—it is this that makes me to turn cold in my soul. Believe me, to pray with all your heart, and strength, that is the last, the greatest achievement of the Christian's warfare on this earth. Lord, teach us to pray!' And with that he burst into a flood of tears and besought me to pray for him! Oh, what a light was there!"

We understand now, and we willingly accept, and we will not forget Jacob's new name of "Israel." Yes: it was meet and he was worthy. For he behaved himself like a prince of the Kingdom of Heaven that night. Prayer, my brethren, is princely work—prayer, that is, like Jacob's prayer at the Jabbok. Prayer, at its best, is the noblest,

the sublimest, the most magnificent, and stupendous act that any creature of God can perform on earth or in heaven. Prayer is far too princely a life for most men. It is high, and they are low, and they cannot attain to it. True prayer is colossal work. There were giants in those days. Would *you* be one of this royal race? Would you stand in the lot of God's princeliest elect at the end of your days? And would you be numbered with His Son and with His choicest saints? Then, *pray*.

"Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full."

*

PERIODS OF DRYNESS

One of the great books on devotion that has enriched the lives of Christians in every branch of the Church universal is The Spiritual Guide by Michael de Molinos, a Spanish priest of the seventeenth century, who figures in J. H. Shorthouse's famous historical novel John Inglesant. Molinos devotes a considerable part of his book to the period of "dryness" in prayer, and we give here his chapters on "Dryness," "Darkness" and "Recollection."

Dryness

25. Thou shalt know that there are two sorts of Prayer, the one tender, delightful, amiable, and full of sentiments; the other obscure, dry, desolate, tempted, and darksome. The first is of Beginners, the second of Proficients, who are in the progress to Perfection. God gives the first to gain Souls, the second to purify them. With the first he uses them like Children, with the second he begins to deal with them as strong men.

26. The first Way may be called the Animal Life, and belongs to them who go in the tract of the sensible

Devotion, which God uses to give to Beginners, to the end that being endowed with that small relish, as the natural man is with the sensible Object, they may addict themselves to the spiritual Life. The second is called the Life of men, and belongs to those who, not minding sensible Pleasure, fight and war against their own Passions, that they may conquer and obtain Perfection, the proper employment of men.

27. Assure thy self, that dryness or aridity is the Instrument of thy Good, because it is nothing else but a want of sensibility,—that inertia,—which puts a stop to the flight of almost all Spiritual Men; and makes them even draw back, and leave off Prayer: as may be seen in many Souls, which only persevere whil'st they taste sensible Consolation.

28. Know that the Lord makes use of the Veil of Dryness, to the end we may not know what he is working in us, and so be humble; because if we felt and knew what he is working in our Souls, satisfaction and presumption would get in, imagining that we were doing some good thing and reckoning our selves very near to God; which would be our undoing.

29. Lay this down as a firm ground in thine Heart, that for walking in the inward Way, all sensibilitie should first be removed; and that the means God uses for that is dryness. But that also he takes away reflection, or that view, whereby the Soul Eyes what it is doing, the only impediment that obstructs the advancing forward, and God communicating Himself and operating in it.

30. Thou oughtest not then to afflict thy self, nor think that thou reapest no fruit, because in coming from a Communion or Prayer, thou hast not the experience of many sentiments, since that is a manifest Cheat. The Husbandman Sows in one time, and reaps in another; So God, upon occasions, and in his own due time will help thee to resist Temptations, and when least thou thinkest,

will give thee holy purposes, and more effectual desires of serving Him. And to the end thou mayest not suffer thy self to be transported, by the violent suggestion of the Enemy, who will enviously perswade thee that thou do'st nothing, and that thou lovest time, that so thou mayest neglect Prayer; I'll declare to thee some of the infinite fruits that thy Soul reaps from that great dryness.

31. I. The first is to persevere in Prayer, from which fruit spring many other advantages.

II. Thou'lt find a loathing of the things of the World, which by little and little tends to the stifling of the bad desires of thy past Life, and the producing of other new ones of serving God.

III. Thou'lt reflect upon many failings on which formerly thou didst not reflect.

IV. Thou'lt find, when thou art about to commit any evil, an advertency in thy Heart, which restrains thee from the execution of it and at other times from Speaking, Lamenting, or Revenging thy self; that'll take thee off from some little earthly Pleasure, or from this or t'other Occasion, or Conversation, into which formerly thou was running in great Peace and Security, without the least Check or Remorse of Conscience.

V. After that, through frailty, thou hast fallen to some light fault, thou'lt feel a Reproof for it in thy Soul which will exceedingly afflict thee.

VI. Thou'lt feel within thy self, desires of suffering, and of doing the will of God.

VII. An inclination to Virtue, and greater ease in overcoming thy self, and conquering the difficulties of the Passions, and Enemies that hinder thee in the way.

VIII. Thou'lt know thy self better, and be confounded also in thy self, feel in thee a high esteem of God above all created Beings, a contempt of Creatures, and a firm Resolution not to abandon Prayer, though thou knowest that it will prove to thee a most cruel Martyrdom.

IX. Thou'lt be sensible of greater Peace in thy Soul, love to Humility, confidence in God, submission, and abstraction from all Creatures; and finally the Sins thou hast omitted since the time that thou exercised thy self in Prayer, are so many signs, that the Lord is working in thy Soul (though thou knowest it not), by means of dry Prayer, and although thou feelest it not whilst thou art in prayer, thou'lt feel it in His due time, when He shall think it fit.

32. All these and many other fruits are like new Buds, that spring from the Prayer which thou would'st give over, because it seems to thee to be dry, that thou seest no Fruit of it, nor reapest no advantage therefrom. Be constant and persevere with Patience, for though thou knowest it not, thy Soul is profited thereby.

Darkness

39. There are two sorts of darkness: some unhappy, and others happy: the first are such as arise from sin, and are unhappy, because they lead the Christian to an eternal precipice. The second are those which the Lord suffers to be in the Soul, to ground and settle it in vertue; and these are happy, because they enlighten it, fortifie it, and cause greater light therein, so that thou oughtest not to grieve and disturb thyself nor be disconsolate in seeing thy self obscure and darksom, judging that God hath failed thee, and the light also that thou formerly had the experience of; thou oughtest rather at that time to persevere constantly in Prayer, it being a manifest sign, that God of his infinite mercy intends to bring thee into the inward path, and happy way of Paradise. O how happy wilt thou be, if thou embrace it with peace and resignation, as the instrument of perfect quiet, true light, and of all thy spiritual good.

40. Know then that the straightest, most perfect and secure way of proficients, is the way of darkness; because in them the Lord placed his own Throne; *And he made*

*darkness his secret place.*¹ By them the supernatural light, which God infused into the Soul, grows and increases. Amidst them wisdom and strong love are begotten, by darkness the soul is annihilated, and the specious appearances which hinder the right view of the divine truth, are consumed. By this means God introduces the Soul by the inward way into the Prayer of Rest and of perfect contemplation, which so few have the experience of. Finally, by darkness the Lord purges the senses and sensibility, which hinder the mystical progress.

41. See now if darknesses be not to be esteemed and embraced. What thou oughtest to do amidst them is to believe, that thou art before the Lord, and in His Presence; but thou oughtest to do so, with a sweet and quiet attention; nor desire to know any thing, nor search after delicacies, tenderness or sensible devotions, nor do any thing but what is the good will and pleasure of God; because otherwise thou wilt only make circles, all thy life time, and not advance one step toward perfection.

Recollection

99. Thou wilt tell me (as many Souls have told me) that though by a perfect Resignation thou hast put thy self in the Presence of God, by means of pure Faith, as hath been already hinted, yet thou dost not merit nor improve, because thy thoughts are so distracted, that thou canst not be fixed upon God.

100. Be not disconsolate, for thou do'st not lose time, nor merit, neither desist thou from Prayer; because it is not necessary, that during that whole time of recollection, thou should'st actually think on God; it is enough that thou hast been attentive in the beginning; provided thou discontinue not thy purpose, nor revoke the actual attention which thou hadst. As he, who hears Mass, and says the Divine Office, performs his Duty very well, by vertue

¹ Psalm xviii. 7.

of that primary actual attention, though afterwards he persevere not, in keeping his thoughts actually fixed on God.

101. This the Angelical Doctor St. Thomas confirms, in the following Words: *That first intention only and thinking on God when one Prays has force and value enough to make the Prayer, during all the rest of the time it continues, to be true, impetratory and meritorious, though all that while there be no actual Contemplation on God.*¹ See now if the Saint could speak more clearly to our purpose.

102. So that (in the Judgement of that Saint) the Prayer still continues, though the Imagination may ramble upon infinite numbers of thoughts, provided one consent not to it, shift not Place, intermit not the Prayer, nor change the first Intention of being with God. And it is certain, that He changes it not, whil'st He does not leave His Place. Hence it follows in sound Doctrine, that one may persevere in Prayer though the Imagination be carried about with various and involuntary thoughts. *He prays in Spirit and Truth* (says the Saint in the fore-cited place) *whoever goes to Prayer with the Spirit and Intention of Praying, though afterwards through Misery and Frailty his thoughts may straggle.*²

103. But thou'lt say, at least, art thou not to remember, that thou art in the presence of God, and often say to him, *Lord abide within me; and I will give my self wholly up to thee.* I answer that there is no necessity for that, seeing thou hast a design to Pray, and for that end went'st to that place. Faith and Intention are sufficient, and these always continue; nay, the more simple that remembrance be, without words, or thoughts, the more pure, spiritual, internal and worthy of God it is.

¹ 2.2. quæst. 82. art. 13. ad 1.

² Evagatio vero mentis quæ fit præter propositum, orationis fructum non tollit.

104. Would it not be impertinent and disrespectful, if being in the Presence of a King, thou should'st ever now and then say to him, *Sir, I believe Your Majesty is here?* It's the very same thing. By the eye of pure Faith, the Soul sees God, Believes in him, and is in His Presence; and so when the Soul believes, it has no need to say, *My God thou art here*; but to believe as it does believe, seeing when Prayer time is come, Faith and Intention guide and conduct it to contemplate God by means of pure Faith, and perfect Resignation.

105. So that, so long as thou retractest not that Faith and Intention of being resigned, thou walkest always in Faith and Resignation, and consequently in Prayer, and in virtual and acquired Contemplation although thou perceive it not, remember it not, neither exertest new Acts and Reflections thereon; after the example of a Christian, a Wife, and a Monk; who, though they make no new Acts and Remembrances, the one as to his Profession, saying, *I am a Monk*, the other as to her Matrimony, saying, *I am a Wife*, and the third as to his Baptism, saying, *I am a Christian*, they cease not for all that from being, the one Baptized, the other Married, and the third Professed. The Christian shall only be obliged to do good Works in Confirmation of his Faith; and to believe more with the Heart, than with the Mouth: the Wife ought to give demonstration of the Fidelity which she promised to her Husband; And the Monk of the Obedience which he made profession of to his Superiour.

106. In the same manner, the inward Soul being once resolved to Believe that God is in it, and that it will not desire nor act any thing but through God, ought to rest satisfied in that Faith and intention, in all its Works and Exercises, without forming or repeating new Acts of the same Faith, nor of such a Resignation.

HUMBLE DEPENDENCE

From first to last the emphasis is to be on God and not ourselves. With this truth, expounded by Miss Evelyn Underhill in The Spiritual Life, we close our consideration of discipline in prayer.

Prayer means turning to Reality, taking our part, however humble, tentative and half-understood, in the continual conversation, the communion, of our spirits with the Eternal Spirit; the acknowledgment of our entire dependence, which is yet the partly free dependence of the child. For Prayer is really our whole life towards God: our longing for Him, our "incurable God-sickness," as Barth calls it, our whole drive towards Him. It is the humble correspondence of the human spirit with the Sum of all Perfection, the Fountain of Life. No narrower definition than this is truly satisfactory, or covers all the ground. Here we are, small half-real creatures of sense and spirit, haunted by the sense of a Perfection ever calling to us, and yet ourselves so fundamentally imperfect, so hopelessly involved in an imperfect world; with a passionate desire for beauty, and more mysterious still, a knowledge of beauty, and yet unable here to realize perfect beauty; with a craving for truth and a deep reverence for truth, but only able to receive flashes of truth. Yet we know that perfect goodness, perfect beauty, and perfect truth exist within the Life of God; and that our hearts will never rest in less than these. This longing, this need of God, however dimly and vaguely we feel it, is the seed from which grows the strong, beautiful and fruitful plant of prayer. It is the first response of our deepest selves to the attraction of the Perfect; the recognition that He has made us for Himself, that we depend on Him and are meant to depend on Him, and that we shall not know the meaning

of peace until our communion with Him is at the centre of our lives.

“Without Thee, I cannot live!” Whatever our small practice, belief, or experience may be, nothing can alter the plain fact that God, the Spirit of spirits, the Life-giving Life, has made or rather is making each person reading these words for Himself; and that our lives will not achieve stability until they are ruled by that truth. All creation has purpose. It looks towards perfection. “In the volume of the book it is written of me, that I should fulfil thy will, O God.” Not in some mysterious spiritual world that I know nothing about; but here and now, where I find myself, as a human creature of spirit and of sense, immersed in the modern world—subject to time with all its vicissitudes, and yet penetrated by the Eternal, and finding reality not in one but in both. To acknowledge and take up that double obligation to the seen and the unseen, in however homely and practical a way, is to enter consciously upon the spiritual life. That will mean time and attention given to it; a deliberate drawing-in from the circumference to the centre, that “setting of life in order” for which St. Thomas Aquinas prayed.

One of the great French teachers of the seventeenth century, Cardinal de Bérulle, summed up the relation of man to God in three words: Adoration, Adherence, Co-operation. This means, that from the first to last the emphasis is to be on God and not on ourselves. Admiring delight, not cadging demands. Faithful and childlike dependence—a clinging to the Invisible, as the most real of all realities, in all the vicissitudes of life—not mere self-expression and self-fulfilment. Disinterested collaboration in the Whole, in God’s vast plan and purpose; not concentration on our own small affairs. Three kinds of generosity. Three kinds of self-forgetfulness. There we have the formula of the spiritual life: a confident reliance on the immense fact of His Presence, everywhere and at

all times, pressing on the soul and the world by all sorts of paths and in all sorts of ways, pouring out on it His undivided love, and demanding an undivided loyalty. The discovery that this is happening all the time, to the just and the unjust—and that we are simply being invited to adore and to serve that which is already there—once it has become a living conviction for us, will inevitably give to our spiritual life a special quality of gratitude, realism, trust. We stand in a world completely penetrated by the Living God, the abiding Source and Sum of Reality. We are citizens of that world now; and our whole life is or should be an acknowledgment of this.

“If I climb up into heaven, thou art there: if I go down to hell, thou art there also. If I take the wings of the morning; and remain in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there also shall thy hand lead me; and thy right hand shall hold me.”

Consider for a moment what, in practice, the word Adoration implies. The upward and outward look of humble and joyful admiration. Awe-struck delight in the splendour and beauty of God, the action of God and Being of God, in and for Himself alone, as the very colour of life: giving it quality of unearthly beauty to the harshest, most disconcerting forms and the dreariest stretches of experience. This is adoration: not a difficult religious exercise, but an attitude of the soul. “To thee I lift up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens”: I don’t turn round and look at myself. Adoration begins to purify us from egotism straight away. It may not always be easy—in fact, for many people it is not at all easy—but it is realism; the atmosphere within which alone the spiritual life can be lived. Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name! That tremendous declaration, with its unlimited confidence and unlimited awe, governs everything else.

What a contrast this almost inarticulate act of measure-

less adoration is, to what Karl Barth calls the dreadful prattle of theology. Hallowed be Thy Name: not described, or analysed by Thy Name. Before that Name, let the most soaring intellects cover their eyes with their wings, and adore. Compared with this, even the coming of the Kingdom and the doing of the Will are side issues; particular demonstrations of the Majesty of the Infinite God, on whom all centres, and for whom all is done. People who are apt to say that adoration is difficult, and it is so much easier to pray for practical things, might remember that in making this great act of adoration they are praying for extremely practical things: among others, that their own characters, homes, social contacts, work, conversation, amusements and politics, may be cleansed from imperfection, sanctified. For all these are part of God's Universe; and His Name must be hallowed in and through them, if they are to be woven into the Divine world, and made what they were meant to be.

A spiritual life involves the setting of our will towards all this. The Kingdom must come as a concrete reality, with a power that leaves no dark corners outside its radius; and the Will be done in this imperfect world, as it is in the perfect world of Eternity. What really seems to you to matter most? The perfection of His mighty symphony, or your own remarkably clever performance of that difficult passage for the tenth violin? And again, if the music unexpectedly requires your entire silence, which takes priority in your feelings? The mystery and beauty of God's orchestration? Or the snub administered to you? Adoration, widening our horizons, drowning our limited interests in the total interest of Reality, redeems the spiritual life from all religious pettiness, and gives it a wonderful richness, meaning and span. And more, every aspect, even the most homely, of our practical life can become part of this adoring response, this total life; and always has done in those who have achieved full spiritual

personality. "*All the earth doth worship thee*" means what it says. The life, beauty and meaning of the whole created order, from the tomtit to the Milky Way, refers back to the Absolute Life and Beauty of its Creator: and so perceived, so lived, every bit has spiritual significance. Thus the old woman of the legend could boil her potatoes to the greater glory of God; and St. Teresa, taking her turn in the kitchen, found Him very easily among the pots and pans.

So here we get, balancing and completing each other, the two first conditions which are to govern man's conscious spiritual life. First, the unspeakable perfection, beauty and attraction of God, absolute in His independent splendour, and calling forth our self-oblivious adoration. And next, the fact that this same infinite God, everywhere present, pours out His undivided love on each of His creatures, and calls each into an ever-deepening communion with Him, a more complete and confident adherence. The completeness of the Perfect includes a completeness of self-giving which yet leaves His essential Being undiminished and unexpressed. He rides upon the floods. It is because of our own limitations that we seem only to receive Him in the trickles. Thus an attitude of humble and grateful acceptance, a self-opening, an expectant waiting, comes next to adoration as the second essential point in the development of the spiritual life. In that life, the spiritually hungry are always filled, if not always with the precise kind of food they expected; and the spiritually rich are sent empty away.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

UNSELFISHNESS IN PRAYER

FROM what has gone before, it need scarcely be said that selfishness profanes prayer—did not Jesus say of the Pharisee that he “prayed with himself”—and that as we rightly use this greatest of life’s privileges, love will become increasingly the ruling power in our lives. That does not mean that we shall become indifferent about ourselves, of course. Prayer serves to teach us the highest and truest worth of personality, and as we realize more of the infinite goodness and love of God towards us, we shall value ourselves as children of His love. The increasing consciousness that God “abideth in us” will inspire us with the deepest of all self-reverence and concern lest we profane the Temple of His indwelling Spirit.

About such self-love, then, there is nothing selfish, and its inevitable sequel is the outgoing of love towards all other children of our Father. There is nothing sentimental about such Christian love. It is infinitely costly, for not only will it demand that we seek to share the joys and sorrows and difficulties of which our brethren may be conscious, but that we take upon our spirit things of which they may be unconscious—sins and defects of character to which they may not yet be awakened. This is the burden which the saints of every age have found themselves called upon to share with God. Our Lord told Peter that He had prayed that he might be delivered from Satan. And St. Paul, though with most gracious tact, told the little Christian communities to which his letters were sent of the prayers that he had made always on their behalf. The word “always” appears again and again in his letters. And when the Apostle said, “I fill up that which is lacking in the sufferings of Christ,” he would be thinking not only

of the physical hardships he was called upon to endure, but of his spiritual passion and yearning for men. He reaches the uttermost of selflessness in his tremendous prayer, "Would God I might be anathema from Christ for my brethren's sake, my kindred according to the flesh."

From this unselfishness in intercession there is ultimately no escape. Unless we draw back from what prayer truly means, it is to this that we shall at last be led: for prayer means the indwelling and control of our spirits by that God who both loves and seeks for men and suffers on their behalf. Yet, paradoxically, such suffering is the highest spiritual privilege and bliss; and even of Christ it is said that "for the joy that was set before Him He endured the Cross."

*

CONTINUING THE WORK OF CHRIST

"True prayer," says John Maillard, "is love in action." When our compassion is stirred, it must needs find some outlet in service. Christ had compassion on the sick, and touched them for healing; but His touch was the outcome of His communion with His Father, and His selfless prayer for others. So as God's love takes possession of our lives it will find expression in acts of loving service and intercessory prayers for "all sorts and conditions of men." This passage is taken from Healing in the Name of Jesus.

Let us take this wonderful act of healing on our Saviour's part, when the poor leper came to Him. He was moved with compassion—that was the first thing. Then came action: Jesus put forth His Hand and touched him, and said "I will, be thou clean." Then, following the action, came the gift. When we pray for others, those three things should be true of our intercessions. When we hear about the sorrows of others—and there are such numbers of them!—our compassion is stirred, and many of us want to know what action should follow. We can't

all put forth our hand and say, "Be thou cleansed"; but there are other just as effective ways in which action may follow when our compassion is aroused.

What was the significance of that putting forth of our Lord's Hand? What was it to do? If we know that, we can copy the action. There is a spiritual counterpart to that action; we can put forth what our Lord put forth when His Hand went out physically. By prayer we can copy His spiritual act, and say to another whose suffering has awakened our compassion, "Be thou cleansed." Thus we see that all prayer in faith is a continuing and extending of the work of our blessed Master. Our service for Him should read like the stories of His own work and healing. Compassion opens the door, and through the open door flows out the virtue. Love has been aroused, but it has been aroused for action, not just for sadness and sorrow at the hapless condition of the pain which has knocked at one's door.

True prayer is love in action, not simply love feeling fettered and weighed down with sadness and grief at the sight of suffering. "He put forth His Hand"; prayer is love reaching out: "and touched him"; prayer is the contact, the fellowship, the communion of love. Then comes the blessing, our hearts echoing the healing words of Christ. Not saying them as though their origin were from our faith, of our hearts, but the prayer of our love is the echo of His creative word. "I will, be thou cleansed!" From compassion follows action, from action follows contact, from contact there results the creative act and healing.

All who are praying for sick cases every day should make a mental note of these steps and stages. When we are asked to pray for someone, we are moved with compassion. Something must be done. Shall we express sadness, grief? No, let us be faithful, and go back to the Dictionary of the Love of God. Let us not stop at compassion, but go right on to the act of healing, till it becomes

effective, and the blessed result is established. So shall our prayers echo the Love-Ministry of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

How wonderful is God's Love! God's Love is not a sentiment, not an emotion. God's Love is not a thought. GOD'S LOVE IS A MAN: AND THE WHOLE OF A MAN—His Will, Affections, His Mind and His Touch. God's Love is nothing less than that—the whole of a life, the whole of a Man, and that Man is Jesus Christ.

God's Love needs the whole of a man in order to express itself, the whole of a life; and if we leave out anything, we are limiting His Love. It needs a man's will, for it is the will that leads to action, and it is the consecrated will that leads to acts of love.

GOD'S LOVE NEEDS A MAN'S TOUCH. When we read the life of Jesus Christ, the Ministry of Touch fills many pages. We mustn't limit this touch to those instances in the Gospels where Jesus laid His Hands on sufferers. There are other ways, just as definite and positive, of touching the lives of others: we can touch them through our prayers. At one of our services we were seeking to touch the life of a young man who was as far away as China. The mother came to the service very distressed, knowing that her son was seriously ill. Through that ministry of prayer and touch which she there received on behalf of her son, God's Love was conveyed, and we know that that young man, thousands of miles away, was reached and strengthened just as definitely as his mother who knelt at the altar.

We touch people through prayer, through faith—these are positive ways in which love expresses itself.

GOD'S LOVE is a MAN, and that Man is Christ Jesus. None of the lives ever touched by Jesus were afflicted and sick because of that touch. On the other hand, they had been touched by other things, rudely and roughly; they were maimed and diseased, sometimes destroyed—but love never did that, God never did that: God has not changed;

God is the same to-day as He was in the Upper Room, and in that Upper Room God was Love!

God's Love is a man—not a sentiment, not an emotion or a thought, but a personality; a complete and whole personality, comprising will, desires, touch, faith—everything. And God wants our personality; He wants the whole of us. He longs for His Love to reach us, to touch, inspire, guide, and to fill us with His Holy Spirit, that we may be His messengers and ministers of love. When our lives are hallowed and sanctified, when love is our life—not just an emotion amongst a bundle of other emotions—when love is a man, the whole of us, then we see God's Love!

God's Love is not a respecter of persons, it does not express itself towards some men and not towards others. Love gives itself completely and fully to all. We can know when the love that is being given is of God or not of God; when it discriminates between persons, it is not of God; when it is given more to some and less to others, it is not God's Love. Thus we know what is the hall-mark of perfect love. Those of us who are disciples of God's Love, of the Love that is a Man, the Love that is our Master, must be very faithful in following Him. His Love in us must be our whole personality. And it must be the same towards all others! When God's Love is inspiring our prayers they will be just as fervent, just as positive and definite for a man in China as they would be for one in our midst. When you pray for one at such a distance, your whole being must be as vibrant with the Love of God as your prayer for one who is your dearest earthly friend.

So we begin to see what that Divine and perfect Love is which God would have abide in us and actuate our lives. God can use you in those ways if behind your prayer there is perfect love. If behind your prayer there is the Man, Christ Jesus, then it can touch other lives in this redemptive and healing way. But your whole being must be at

God's command; not your will only, not your emotions only, not your mind only—but your whole being, body, mind and spirit.

Let us all get that perfect Love of God behind our prayers. Let us realize that unless God's Love is at the back of our prayers, unless God's Love is filling the whole man, the whole personality, it is not possible for him to touch other lives. But when God's Love is behind our prayers, other lives are reached and touched, made steadfast and healed.

I know perfectly well that for many of us nothing less than this abundant baptism of God's Love can do any good. Some afflictions are too grave to be removed by a sentiment. But they can be reached and they can be removed by a Man Whom Love has created—even the Man Christ Jesus.



THE SIGNS OF SELFISHNESS IN PRAYER

The way in which we can diagnose selfishness in prayer is now discussed by Ronald Sinclair, who then passes to the work for others to which God calls us in prayer, and the need to bring orderliness and method into our intercession. The passage is from When We Pray.

One of the great dangers which threaten the lives of all Christian people who try to pray with reality is that of Spiritual selfishness. Of all forms of selfishness this is probably the most subtle and the most deadly. When the soul is weaned from all selfishness in outward things there may still lurk unrecognized within the very core of the soul this spiritual selfishness. Having renounced the "vain pomps and vanities of this wicked world," having overcome worldly ambition and worldliness, self-interest may be found seeking compensation for that which it has

renounced outwardly within the life of prayer. It is possible to spend a considerable time in prayer and meditation, and yet to remain fundamentally selfish. There is a kind of spiritual self-indulgence, which, like a cancer, eats its way into the soul, and even feeds on a certain kind of prayer. The fact is that, where we are infected with this malady of spiritual self-indulgence, it is due to the fact that self and not God is the centre of our prayer.

We pray for our own spiritual profit and pleasure, just as many who go to Church do so "because they like it." The symptoms of this self-centred prayer are introspection, lack of adoration and worship, dependence on feelings and emotions, lack of thanksgiving, and finally lack of intercession of praying for others. If we examine our prayer life carefully and find these symptoms, we may at once diagnose spiritual selfishness. The cure is to turn away decisively from preoccupation with the self and its moods and feelings; then to turn deliberately to a picture of God in Christ; and above all to adore and worship Him. Studdert Kennedy used to say that Christ never promised His followers a cushion, but a Cross; and our prayer life should not be a spiritual luxury but a costly and self-sacrificing act of love, marked with the hall mark of true Christianity, the Cross.

Then our prayer should not finish on the Mount of Vision, but on the plain, so to speak. We must share our vision of the Lord with others, bringing them to Him and Him to them. There is hard work to be done in prayer: work that affects mightily other people and the world we live in. This wondrous work is wrought by the mighty power of intercession. The man or woman who prays regularly for others becomes a tremendous power for good; he or she is a channel through which stream that strange traffic of human need Godwards, and the Divine Love and Power manwards. If we have been blessed with the vision of Christ in mental imagery we shall long for

others to share it. We cannot keep it to ourselves; to do so is to court spiritual stagnation. His very purpose is that He may use us to show His Glory and Love to others. And this can often best be done by bringing others to Him in prayer. In prayer for others we can indeed do mighty works for God. Mankind is a unity. No man liveth unto himself. We are knit together for good or ill; we are interdependent. We are by no means equally endowed with gifts. We cannot "keep ourselves to ourselves" or cut ourselves off from the rest of mankind. We depend on others for our very existence, for food, for clothes, for inter-communication, for light, heat and for countless other things. The sweat and toil of countless men and women are used by us every moment we live. On how many people does the average bread winner depend from the time he gets up in the morning to the time he reaches his business a couple of hours later? Yet we never stop to think of all these multitudes of men and women on whom we depend for our existence.

Moreover, we constantly look to others to do things for us, and we trust them with our very lives. We do not go about wondering whether the cook will poison us, or whether the engine-driver is trustworthy. We entrust our money to the banker, and put our lives into the hands of doctors and surgeons.

And so when we pray there is a real sense in which we act on behalf of others. There is a real "priesthood of the laity," a real offering of ourselves and, with ourselves, all on whom we depend for life. Just as we expect others to work for us, so they in their turn have every right to expect us to work for them in prayer. It may be the best way of repaying the debt we owe to them. Many men and women are for various reasons incapable of much prayer, either constitutionally or because of the pressure of their environment. It is our duty as well as our privilege to represent them in prayer and to pray in their

name. We come into our silent place as one with all humanity.

There is a beautiful story in the Gospels of a sick man and his friends. He was bedridden. He was quite incapable of getting to Jesus by himself. But he had four good friends, and when they heard that Jesus was near at hand in a house, they proceeded to carry their sick friend thither. They were full of faith and hope. When they reached the door of the house where Jesus was staying, the crowd was so great that they could not get near Him. But they did not give up in despair. Climbing up by the outside stairway of that Eastern house, with infinite courage and patience and no little difficulty, they broke up the roof of grass and rushes, and let their sick friend down in front of Jesus. And Jesus, "*seeing their faith,*" gave the man healing of mind and body.

This is a very good picture of intercession. For we in our intercessory prayer bring others, who cannot come themselves, to the feet of Our Lord. And Jesus, seeing our faith, does what is best for them. No words are needed, we just act in faith and bring them to the Christ. We are probably linked to each other in mysterious ways besides the more obvious outward bonds of union. We do not yet know clearly how this is so; but it is a fact beyond dispute that mind can influence mind in ways beyond our comprehension. And if we can influence other minds by these deep and mysterious means, it is not very difficult to believe that The Mind which is in vital touch with all minds, and from whom they derive their very existence, can influence us all.

Now, let us proceed to link on this praying for others to what we have tried to learn about our way of prayer. It will be found helpful to have a subject, round which our prayer is centred, for every day of the week. The choice of subject will be governed by some group or class of people for whom we wish to pray. It is a good thing

to buy a note-book and to have at least a page for each day of the week. Thus, for example, we will suppose that Tuesday's main subject for prayer is "Child Life." At our fixed time for our main prayer of the day, we shall go into the silent place of our minds, having at hand our Bible and our note-book. Then, having carefully shut the door, and when all is still and quiet within, we shall choose a picture from the Gospel story to fit our subject. At once there occurs to the mind the story of St. Mark, chapter x, of Christ blessing the children. We shall let our imagination picture the scene. There is a little group of very serious grown-ups, the Apostles. They are listening to Our Lord. Outside the group are mothers with babies in their arms; whilst playing in and out of the apostolic legs are noisy boys and girls. It is a very natural, everyday picture. As we look at the picture, so full of life and movement and colour, we notice that Peter and some of the others are seen to leave the inner circle and to speak bluntly and sharply to the mothers. We can imagine what they are saying. "The Master is busy with us: these children are making a noise: they are in the way. And your babies are crying, so that we cannot hear what He is saying to us." Jesus stops speaking. He stretches out His hand in welcome to the children and they all begin clambering up on to His knees to hear a story. Jesus takes the crying baby into His arms and at once it ceases its cries and is quiet. The mothers are full of joy and gratitude. The great words about the infinite value of Child Life in the eyes of God are spoken. . . . The picture will have become real for us by now. But we must not stop there and leave it at that. We must go out in thought to the homes and streets of our town or village, and bring the children and their mothers into our silent place. The door will now be flung wide open and we shall shepherd the children we know and love, and even those we do not know, into the Presence of the Lover of Children. We shall quite

quietly and silently hand them over to Him, and He will do the rest.

Then we shall bring the child we love best in all the world and lay him or her at the feet of Our Lord. Another day, perhaps, our thought will range wider afield, and we shall present to Him children from distant lands of all nations and every colour.

Let us suppose again, that on Mondays our subject is "Leaders." No man ever became a leader of men until he has first been a disciple or learner. Simon Peter the sheep was changed by contact with Jesus into Simon Peter the shepherd. We shall go in on Monday morning at the appointed time to our trysting-place, the little room in our minds, and, when we have shut the door on all distracting thoughts, we shall open our Bibles and choose our picture. We might choose several which would suit this subject equally well. Jesus was always training His men to be leaders. We will select the picture of Jesus taking the Twelve for a walking tour round the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, away from the crowds of Galilee, for a little intimate and intensive training. How wonderful it must have been to go on a walking tour with Jesus! We shall see them before our mind's eye absorbed in what He has to say about the art of leadership. He always saw the pathos of crowds: they were like sheep having no shepherd, and so He trains His little band of friends to be shepherds of men. To that we may link His teaching about true kingship and the revolutionary contrast He draws between "the kings of the Gentiles," who lord it over their people, and His ideal of the kingship of loving service and gentleness.

We shall take our place in that group and adore and worship Him as King and Shepherd. Then we shall go out in thought to some conference of statesmen which may be sitting at the time, and we shall think of the great responsibility for the welfare of mankind which rests upon

them. What a lot they might learn if only they would sit together at the feet of the Good Shepherd, or allow Him to preside over their deliberations! Well, we can pray for them and bring them to Our Lord. We shall try to picture them walking with Him or sitting round Him on the grass listening to His teaching on the art of leadership.

Or another time we may think of other shepherds of Christ's sheep—Bishops, Priests, Teachers, Missionaries, Mothers, Fathers, and so on, and we shall bring them, too, into our silent place and place them in the picture around Our Lord.

This way of praying for others is as fascinating as it is varied. It can be practised at all times and in all places; for we can carry our Silent Place within us wherever we may be, and we shall often find ourselves looking at "our picture for the day," and bringing those we meet in our day's work to Christ. There are so many "weary and heavy laden" folk who need the friendship of Christ to-day. It is our privilege to introduce them to Him in prayer. They are more often than not unconscious of their need of Him, and try to drown the ache for His friendship by an orgy of pleasure or even by drink and drugs. Others there are who are ashamed to meet Him, because they think He has no use for "the likes of them." Yet I think the title He loves best of all the titles which He bears is "The Friend of publicans and sinners."

And then there is that large class of persons "who don't hold with religion." Perhaps they never hear the name of Christ except in blasphemy. Yet He was the friend of all who laboured with their hands. Think of Jesus discussing types of weather or the art of fishing with Simon Peter, James and John, as they mended their nets. Jesus was interested in men as men, and in their work, too, and not merely in what we call religion in its narrow sense. No doubt He could take His turn with the rudder and the sail: He was no mere passenger in their boats.

A mechanic friend of mine loves to think of Jesus working with him, and he pictures Him as clothed in mechanic's blue overalls, spotted and stained with grease. We shall love to bring all these folk He loves to Him. And all the time we shall remember that this gracious human friend is none other than the Portrait of the Unseen God: and that as He is so is God Himself.

*

THE DEMAND AND PRESSURE OF
CREATIVE LOVE

None the less we must not think that unselfishness in prayer consists in praying for others. We may be praying for others and be feeding our secret pride as we contemplate our unselfishness. True unselfishness, or perhaps it were better to say selflessness, consists in responding to the "demand and pressure of Creative Love." Let us listen to Miss Evelyn Underhill on this great theme, in her wise and inspiring little book The Spiritual Life.

The over-ruling reality of life is the Will and Choice of a Spirit acting not in a mechanical but in a living and personal way; and the spiritual life of man does not consist in mere individual betterment, or assiduous attention to his own soul, but in a free and unconditional response to that Spirit's pressure and call, whatever the cost may be.

The first question here, then, is not "What is best for my soul?" nor is it even "What is most useful to humanity?" But—transcending both these limited aims—what function must this life fulfil in the great and secret economy of God? How directly and fully that principle admits us into the glorious liberty of the children of God; where we move with such ease and suppleness, because the whole is greater than any of its parts and in that whole we have forgotten ourselves.

Indeed, if God is All and His Word to us is All, that must mean that He is the reality and controlling factor of every situation, religious or secular; and that it is only for His glory and creative purpose that it exists. Therefore our favourite distinction between the spiritual life and the practical life is false. We cannot divide them. One affects the other all the time: for we are creatures of sense and of spirit, and must live an amphibious life. Christ's whole ministry was an exhibition, first in one way and then in another, of this mysterious truth. It is through all the circumstances of existence, inward and outward, not only those which we like to label spiritual, that we are pressed to our right position and given our supernatural food. For a spiritual life is simply a life in which all that we do comes from the centre, where we are anchored in God: a life soaked through and through by a sense of His reality and claim, and self-given to the great movement of His will.

Most of our conflicts and difficulties come from trying to deal with the spiritual and practical aspects of our life separately instead of realizing them as parts of one whole. If our practical life is centred on our own interests, cluttered up by possessions, distracted by ambitions, passions, wants and worries, beset by a sense of our own rights and importance, or anxieties for our own future, or longings for our own success, we need not expect that our spiritual life will be a contrast to all this. The soul's house is not built on such a convenient plan: there are few sound-proof partitions in it. Only when the conviction—not merely the idea—that the demand of the Spirit, however inconvenient, comes first and *is* first, rules the whole of it, will those objectionable noises die down which have a way of penetrating into the nicely furnished little oratory, and drowning all the quieter voices by their din.

St. John of the Cross, in a famous and beautiful poem, described the beginning of the journey of his soul to God:

“In an obscure night
Fevered by Love’s anxiety
O hapless, happy plight
I went, none seeing me,
Forth from my house, where all things quiet be.”

Not many of us could say that. Yet there is no real occasion for tumult, strain, conflict, anxiety, once we have reached the living conviction that God is All. All takes place within Him, He alone matters, He alone is. Our spiritual life is His affair; because, whatever we may think to the contrary, it is really produced by His steady attraction, and our humble and self-forgetful response to it. It consists in being drawn, at His pace and in His way, to the place where He wants us to be; not the place we fancied for ourselves.

Some people may seem to us to go to God by a moving staircase; where they can assist matters a bit by their own efforts, but much gets done for them and progress does not cease. Some appear to be whisked past us in a lift; whilst we find ourselves on a steep flight of stairs with a bend at the top, so that we cannot see how much farther we have to go. But none of this really matters; what matters is the conviction that all are moving towards God, and, in that journey, accompanied, supported, checked and fed by God. Since our dependence on Him is absolute, and our desire is that His Will shall be done, this great desire can gradually swallow up, neutralize all our small self-centred desires. When that happens life, inner and outer, becomes one single, various act of adoration and self-giving; one undivided response of the creature to the demand and pressure of Creative Love.

THE NOBLEST THING IN FRIENDSHIP

We spend much time and money in sending our friends gifts at Christmas time, or on their birthdays, but how much time or effort are we prepared to spend in praying for them? Dr. Alexander Whyte presses this question upon us in his sermon on Concentration in Prayer in Lord, Teach Us To Pray.

It is quite true that secret prayer is the most purely spiritual of all human employments. That is quite true. Secret prayer is the last thing to be shut up to places, and bound down to times. At the same time we men, as Butler says, are what we are. And it is just the extreme spirituality of secret prayer that makes time, as well as seclusion, absolutely indispensable for its proper performance and for its full fruit. If we rush through a few verses of a familiar psalm, or a few petitions of the Lord's Prayer, and then up and out of our door as we should not be allowed to do in the presence-chamber of our sovereign, then we had as well—nay, we had better—not have gone to our knees at all. But if we enter our closet with half the fear, with half the wonder and awe, with half the anxiety to be recognized and addressed with which we would enter the palace of a prince on earth, then, so willing is God to be approached that He will immediately meet with us and will bless us. Hurry, then, in our secret devotions, is impossible. If you are in such a desperate hurry, go and do the thing that so hurries you, and God will wait. He is in no hurry. He will tarry your leisure. No! Let there be no hurry here. God is God; and man is man. Let all men, then, take time and thought when they would appear before God.

And then, it sometimes takes a long time even to get the door shut, and to get the key to turn in the rusty lock.

Last week¹ I became very miserable as I saw my time slipping away, and my vow not performed. I therefore one afternoon stole into my coat and hat, and took my staff, and slipped out of the house in secret. For two hours, for an hour and three-quarters, I walked alone and prayed: but pray as I would, I got not one step nearer God all these seven or eight cold miles. My guilty conscience mocked me to my face, and said to me: Is it any wonder that God has cast off a minister and a father like thee? For two hours I struggled on, forsaken of God, and met neither God nor man all that chill afternoon. When, at last, standing still, and looking at Schiehallion clothed in white from top to bottom, this of David shot up into my heart: "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow!" In a moment I was with God. Or, rather, God, as I believe, was with me. Till I walked home under the rising moon with my head waters and with my heart in a flame of prayer; naming and describing, first my own children to God, and then yours. Two hours is a long time to steal away from one's books and companions to swing one's walking-stick, and to utter unavailing ejaculations to one's self in a wintry glen: but then, my two hours look to me now—as they tasted to me then—the best strength and the best sweetness of all my Christmas holiday.

And then, when secret, mental, and long-accumulated intercession is once begun, it is like the letting out of waters—there is no end to it. Why, my children almost made me forget you and your children. And then, our friends! how bad we all are to our friends! how short-sighted, how cruel, how thoughtless, how inconsiderate! We send them gifts. Our children cover their Christmas tree with Christmas presents to our friends. Our friends cost us a great deal of thought and trouble and money, from time to time. We send them sheaves of cards with all manner of affectionate devices and verses. We take time and we write our

¹ Preached after a holiday at Bonskeid.

old friends, at home and abroad, letters full of news and of affection on Christmas Day and on New Year's Day. But we never pray for them! Or, at best, we pray for them in a moment of time, and in a great hurry. Why do we do everything for our friends but the best thing? How few of us shut our door during all the leisure of the last fortnight, and deliberately, and particularly, and with discrimination, and with importunity prayed for our dearest and best friends! We discriminated in our purchases for our friends, lest we should slight or offend our friends: but not in our prayers. Who in the family, who in the congregation, who in the city, who abroad, will be surprised with some blessing this year? Surprised—with some unexpected providence, some despaired-of deliverance, some cross lifted off, or left and richly blessed, some thorn taken out of their flesh, some salvation they had not themselves had faith to ask for? And all because we asked, and importuned, and “shut our door” upon God and ourselves in their behalf. A friend of any kind, and to any extent and degree, is something to have in this cold and lonely world. But to have a friend who has the ear of God, and who fills God's ear from time to time with our name and our case—Oh, where shall I find such a friend? Oh, who shall find such a friend henceforth in me?

When a minister, going out for a long walk, takes his sick-list in his pocket; or his visiting-book; or his long roll of young communicants, no longer young; or when an elder or a deacon thinks of the people of his district; or a Sabbath school teacher his class, and the fathers and mothers of his class; or a mistress her servants; or a father his children; or a friend his friends; or an enemy his enemies—many a knock will come to his door before he is done: many a mile will he have walked before he is done. Our Lord took all night up in a mountain over the names of His twelve disciples. And since the day of His ascension nearly nineteen hundred years ago He has been in con-

tinual intercession in heaven for all those who have been in intercession for themselves and for other men on earth. Day and night—He slumbers not nor sleeps: keeping Israel by His unceasing, particular, discriminating, importunate intercession.



THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS

*Are we to limit the scope of our intercessory prayers to the living, or can we pray for those who have passed beyond death? If human personality survives death—and whenever prayer has brought men to vital communion with God it has brought assurance of the infinite value of the human soul—it is surely unnatural to shut out of our prayers those who have preceded us through the grave. Like us they “live and move and have their being in God,” through whom we may still commune with them. This truth the Church has emphasized in her doctrine of the Communion of Saints, and we will conclude this chapter with two passages in which the faith that we ought to pray for those who have passed beyond death, and that they can bless us through their prayers, is discussed. The first is from Canon Anthony C. Deane’s *The Valley and Beyond*, and the second from Dr. J. Paterson Smyth’s *The Gospel of the Hereafter*.*

As we pray in some building consecrated by the devotions of centuries, how near seem those who met within its walls long ago! When in the quiet of early morning we kneel before the altar, how thin becomes the veil separating us from those most dear to us, who now await us in the next stage of life, and mingle their worship with our own imperfect prayers! At such moments we hold, through Christ, Holy Communion with the departed. Us

He touches with one hand, those on the farther side with the other.

What have we lost? Well, we have lost his visible companionship, but no more, and that only for a time. We still love him, and he, because otherwise he would have ceased to be himself, still loves us, and thinks of us, and prays for us far better than the limitations of earthly knowledge allowed him to do while he was in this world. In that way probably he is able to do much more for us than ever he could in the bygone years; and when we remember him in our prayers, how near he seems! Always, too, to help us is not only his dear memory—the love between us is secure now, with no further risk of its ever being shadowed by differences or misunderstanding—but also by the certainty that presently we shall meet again. How many things there are we long to tell him! Continually there are experiences of one kind or another which come into our lives, and almost our first thought is, “How he would have liked to hear about this,” or “How I should have hastened to send him a long letter about that.” Well, we must wait. The time will come. How much he too must be storing up to tell us when we do meet! Meanwhile, we must try to live as he would wish us, as he is praying that we may, and in such a way that we may not feel ashamed or unworthy of his affection when visible companionship is renewed.

Do those who have crossed the boundary of death know now of our life on earth? Can there be between us comradeship in any sense? Can there be love and care and sympathy and prayer between us on these two sides of the grave, as there is between friends on earth on the two sides of the Atlantic?

The Church says yes, and calls it in her Creed the Communion of Saints. The Communion of Saints—a very grand name, but it means only a very simple thing.

—just loving sympathy between us and these elder brothers and sisters beyond the grave.

The term “saint” in the New Testament only means any poor humble servant of Christ “set apart” to Him, baptized into His name. Communion means fellowship, comradeship. Therefore the Communion of Saints simply means fellowship between Christians, and in Church language has come chiefly to mean fellowship between Christians at this side and at the other side of death.

It is a prominent doctrine of the Church’s Creed, and, rightly understood, it is a very beautiful and touching doctrine—not only because of the union of fellowship with our departed, but especially because the bond of that union and fellowship is our dear Lord Himself, whom we and they alike love and thank and praise and pray to and worship, and from whom we and they alike derive the Divine sustenance of our souls.

You know what a bond of union it is between two men even to find that they both deeply honour and admire and love the same friend and benefactor. They become one in him. The Bible means that, but a great deal more, when it says we are “one in Christ Jesus.”

Here on earth, there in Paradise, is His presence. Here on earth, there in Paradise, is the love and prayer and praise going forth to Him, and the strength and power of God coming back from Him. You know His own simile, “I am the Vine, ye are the branches.” From the central vine the life rises and flows to every farthest branch and twig and leaf, connecting them all in the one life. He the Sacred Vine is on earth with us and in Paradise with them. Some of the branches are in the shadow here, some of them are in the sunlight there, but we are all united through the Lord Himself. He is the Vine, we are the branches. Because He is with us here, prayer and praise and all the functions of the Church are here. Because He is with them in Paradise, prayer and praise and all the

functions of the Church go on in Paradise. Every Sunday, as we in our poor way love Him and worship Him and pray to Him and praise Him, our dear ones beyond are doing the very same. Notice how in the Communion Service we remind ourselves of the fact: "Therefore with angels and archangels and all the company of Heaven we laud and magnify Thy holy name," etc. It is not we alone who feed on His Divine life, it is not the altar on earth alone that commemorates the all-prevailing virtues of the atoning Blood, for the same Victim is the central object of adoration beyond, as saints and angels and all redeemed creation are taking up together with us the chorus of that everlasting hymn.

If we on this side were living closer to Our Lord and closer to our departed, how close might that comradeship become! We should tell Our Lord so much about each other. We should think of each other and remember each other and sympathize with each other and pray for each other. We are very close if we would but realize it.

"Death hides, but it does not divide—
Thou art but on Christ's other side;
Thou art with Christ and Christ with me,
In Him I still am close to thee."

Yes, you say, that is a beautiful thought. But is that all? My poor heart is craving for more communion than that. Do they know or care about my love and sorrow to-day? And are they helping me? Are they praying for me to that dear Lord whom we both love—in whose presence we both stand to-day? And can I do anything for them on my side in this "Communion of Saints"?

Do they pray for us or help us in any way?

Since they are with Christ of course they pray. The world to come is the very atmosphere of prayer. St. John in his vision tells of "the offering of the golden vials full of odours which are the prayers of the saints" (Rev. v. 8).

And again three chapters later the angel stood to offer the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar.

Can you imagine your mother, who never went to bed here without earnest prayer for her boy, going into that life with full consciousness and full memory of the dear old home on earth, and never a prayer for her boy rising to the altar of God?

Why, even the selfish Dives, after death, could not help praying for his brothers!

Aye, she is praying for you. I think amongst the most precious prayers before the golden altar are the mother's prayers for her boy who is left behind on earth.

But, you say, she does not know anything about my life or my needs on earth. Even if she did not know, she would surely pray for you. But I am not so sure that she does not know. There are several hints in Scripture to suggest that she does know—hints so strong that if you are doing anything now that she would like, I should advise you to keep on doing it, and if you are doing anything now that you would not wish her to know, I would advise you to stop doing it.

Our Lord represents Abraham as knowing all about Moses and the prophets, who came a thousand years after his time (Luke xvi. 29).

Our Lord distinctly tells the Jews that Abraham in that life knew all about His mission on earth. "Your Father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad" (John viii. 56).

At the Transfiguration, too, Moses and Elias came out from that Waiting Life to speak with Christ of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem. Does it not suggest at once that they and their great comrades within the veil were watching eagerly and knowing all about the life of Christ and the great crisis of man's redemption towards which they had been working on earth long years ago? Can anyone believe that the whole

Waiting Church within the veil, living, and conscious, and thinking, and remembering, were absolutely ignorant and unconcerned about the greatest event that ever came in the history of their race?

The writer in the Epistle to the Hebrews apparently believed that our departed ones were watching our course, for after a long list of the great departed heroes of faith in olden time he writes to encourage us in the race on earth: "Seeing that we are encompassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and run with patience the race that is set before us" (Heb. xii.). The picture suggested is that of the runners in the amphitheatre on earth, and the galleries of Creation crowded with sympathetic watchers like the "old boys" of a great English school coming back at the annual school games to cheer on the lads and remember how they had run themselves long ago in the very same fields.¹

And the hope which Scripture thus suggests and never contradicts commends itself to reason and to the deepest instincts in our hearts.

I think of a mother leaving her children and going into a full conscious life, where, mark you, she can still think and remember and love. I see that her love for them was probably the most powerful influence in ennobling her life here. And she has gone into a life where that ennobling is God's chief aim for her. Since she can remember them, I feel quite sure that if she had the choice she would want to watch over them always.

But, somebody says, she might not be quite happy if she knew all that they had to go through. Seeing that at any rate she remembers them, do you think she would be more happy if she knew that they might have to go

¹ It is true that the Greek word translated "witnesses" is not the word meaning "spectators," but rather "witnesses for the faith," but as most good commentators (including Bishop Westcott) say—it is impossible to exclude the thought of spectators in an amphitheatre watching a race. The Revised Version, too, seems to accept this view, for it prints the words "witnesses" without any marginal remark.

through troubles of which she could not learn anything? Put yourself in the place of any mother that you know, and ask if it would make her any happier to stop all letters about her children who she felt might be in danger or trouble. Are you quite sure that in that spirit life a peaceful contentment like that of the cow who forgets her calf is the highest thing to be desired? The higher any soul grows on earth the less can it escape unselfish sorrow for the sake of others. Must it not be so in that land also? Surely the Highest Himself must have more sorrow than anyone else for the sins and troubles of men. Have you ever thought of that "eternal pain" of God? If there be joy in His presence over one sinner that repenteth, must there not be pain in His presence over one that repenteth not?

There are surely higher things in God's plans for His saints than mere selfish happiness and content. There is the blessedness that comes of sympathy with Him over human sorrow or pain. We but degrade the thought of the blessedness of the redeemed when we desire that they should escape that.

And since in that life she is "with Christ," and able doubtless to win for her children more than she could ever win on earth, and since she knows that Christ is more solicitous for them than she is herself and that she can trust Him utterly to do for them more than she can ask or think, does it not seem far more probable that she should still know and care and love and pray and share in the care and sympathy of Christ for them?

Yes, I think probably she does know about them. I know certainly she prays about them. I myself hope and believe that some of the best helps in my life have been won for me by those on the other side who love me and who are so near to their Lord.

And it is a strong confirmation of that belief when I find it the belief of the great bishops and teachers of the

early Church in its purest and most loving days, the days nearest to those of Christ and His Apostles.

St. Cyprian, the martyr bishop of Carthage, who was born in the century after St. John's death (A.D. 200), made an agreement with his friend Cornelius that whichever of them died first should in the Unseen Land remember in prayer him who was left behind. "Let us mutually be mindful of each other. . . . On both sides let us always pray for each other; let us relieve our afflictions and distresses by a reciprocity of love, and whichever of us goes hence before the other by the speed of the Divine favour, let our affection continue before the Lord, let not prayer for our brothers and sisters cease before the mercy of the Father" (Ep. lvii. *ad Cornel.*). And in the days of the plague at Carthage, A.D. 252, he comforts his fellow citizens, reminding them of "the large number of dear ones, parents, brothers, children—a goodly and numerous crowd longing for us, and while their own immortality is assured still longing for our salvation."

Origen, who was a contemporary of Cyprian, says: "All the souls who have departed this life still retaining their love for those who are in the world concern themselves for their salvation and aid them by their prayers and mediation with God. For it is written in the Book of the Maccabees, 'This is Jeremiah the prophet, who always prays for the people'" (*In Cant.*, Hom. iii.). And in another work he says, "It is my opinion that all those fathers who have fallen asleep before us fight on our side and aid us by their prayers" (*In Jesu Nave*, Hom. xvi. ch. 19). And again, "They [in that Unseen Life] understand who are worthy of Divine approval, and are not only well disposed to these themselves, but co-operate with them in their endeavours to please God; they seek His favour on their behalf and with their prayers and intercessions they join their own." And again, "These [in the Unseen Life] pray for us and bring help to our perishable race, and, if

I may so speak, take up arms alongside of it" (*Contra Celsum*, viii. 64).

St. Gregory Nazianzen is preaching the funeral sermon of St. Basil. "He still prays for the people," he says, "for he did not so leave us as to have left us altogether." And in his funeral sermon over his own father, "I am satisfied that he accomplishes there now by his prayers more than he ever did by his teaching, just in proportion as he approaches nearer to God after having shaken off the fetters of his body."

St. Cyril, Bishop of Jerusalem, in his catechetical lectures, and St. Chrysostom in several of his homilies, speak of the help we get through the prayers of departed holy men.

St. Ambrose, in his great grief at his brother's death, says: "What other consolation is left me but this—that I hope to come to thee, my brother, speedily, that thy departure will not entail a long separation between us, and that power may be granted me by thy intercessions that thou mayest summon me who long to join thee more speedily?"

St. Jerome, who gave us the Vulgate, the great Revised Bible of the Western Church, is comforting a mother who has lost a daughter. "She entreats the Lord for thee, and begs for me the pardon of my sins." Again, to another friend, Heliodorus, he speaks of the life after death. "There you will be made a fellow burgher with St. Paul. There also you will seek for your parents the rights of the same citizenship. There too you will pray for me who spurred you on to victory." Again he vigorously disputes with Vigilantius, who asserts that prayers and intercessions must cease after death: "If the apostles and martyrs while still in the body are able to pray for others . . . how much more may they do so now! . . . One man, Moses, obtains from God pardon for 600,000 men in arms; and Stephen, the imitator of his Lord, begs forgiveness for his perse-

cutors. Shall their power be less after they have begun to be with Christ? ”¹

But sympathy and prayer must not be on one side only. It must be mutual in the Communion of Saints. They remembering and loving and thinking about us; we remembering and loving and thinking about them. They asking from their Lord blessing for us; we asking from Him blessing for them. For surely they are not above wanting His blessings still—not even the best of them: though safe with Him, though forgiven their sins, they are still imperfect, still needing to grow in grace, in purification, in fitness for the final heaven by and by. And we can help their growth as they can help ours.

Some of the most deeply religious people that I know shrink from the thought of prayer for the departed. There has been reason for it. This beautiful old custom, the custom of the Jews, the custom of the whole Christian Church till the Reformation,² had grown at that time into great corruption. And one danger of great corruption is that indignant reformers are likely to tear away more than the corruption, “hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.” So it was here. Because of the abuse men feared even the use. In their hatred of the sordid traffic in masses for the dead they looked with suspicion on any prayer for the departed. And at length they began to think that such prayers were even wrong.

Ah! it was a pity. Our departed ones have more quickly passed into oblivion. The great Paradise life has almost faded from our view. We are the more lonely in our desolate bereavement. Perhaps our dear ones beyond are the more lonely too, if they know about our life and our prayers on earth. A friend said to me lately: “I was

¹ See Luckock, *After Death*.

² The evidence for this statement can be seen in full in any standard work on the subject—e.g., Luckock, *After Death*, or Lee, *Christian Doctrine of Prayer for the Departed*.

a little child when the news came of father's death far away. That night in my prayers I prayed for him as usual. But my aunt stopped me. 'Darling,' she said, 'you must not pray for father now. It is wrong.' And I can remember still," added my friend, "how I shrank back, feeling as if someone had slammed the door and shut father outside."

I think we should be happier and better, I think the Unseen World would come back more clearly on our horizon, if we kept our dear ones in our prayers as we used to do before they died. Do not keep any hidden chambers in your heart shut out from Christ. Bring your dear departed ones to Him as you bring all else to Him. He knows what is best for them. Pray only for that. Pray, "Lord, help them to grow closer to Thee. Help them, if it may be, to help others, and make them happy in Thy great kingdom until we meet again." Pray something like that. Oh, how can you help doing it, if you love them and believe in prayer!

"How can I cease to pray for thee? Somewhere
In God's wide universe thou art to-day.
Can He not reach thee with His tender care?
Can He not hear me when for thee I pray?
Somewhere thou livest and hast need of Him,
Somewhere thy soul sees higher heights to climb,
And somewhere, too, there may be valleys dim
Which thou must pass to reach the heights sublime.
Then all the more because thou canst not hear
Poor human words of blessing, will I pray.
O true, brave heart, God bless thee, wheresoe'er
In God's wide universe thou art to-day! "

EPILOGUE

PRAYER AND LIFE

BY EVELYN UNDERHILL

WE shall not live up to our call as spiritual creatures unless we are willing to pull our weight. The theological axiom that "Man's will and God's grace rise and fall together" must be translated into practical terms, and given practical effect. More is required of those who wake up to reality, than the passive adoration of God or intimate communion with God. Those responses, great as they are, do not cover the purpose of our creation. The riches and beauty of the spiritual landscape are not disclosed to us in order that we may sit in the sun parlour, be grateful for the excellent hospitality, and contemplate the glorious view. Some people suppose that the spiritual life mainly consists in doing that. God provides the spectacle. We gaze with reverent appreciation from our comfortable seats, and call this proceeding Worship.

No idea of our situation could be more mistaken than this. Our place is not the auditorium but the stage—or, as the case may be, the field, workshop, study, laboratory—because we ourselves form part of the creative apparatus of God, or at least are meant to form part of the creative apparatus of God. He made us in order to use us, and use us in the most profitable way; for His purpose, not ours. To live a spiritual life means subordinating all other interests to that single fact. Sometimes our position seems to be that of tools; taken up when wanted, used in ways

which we had not expected for an object on which our opinion is not asked, and then laid down. Sometimes we are the currency used in some great operation, of which the purpose is not revealed to us. Sometimes we are servants, left year in, year out to the same monotonous job. Sometimes we are conscious fellow workers with the Perfect, striving to bring the Kingdom in. But whatever our particular place or job may be, it means the austere conditions of the workshop, not the free-lance activities of the messy but well-meaning amateur; clocking in at the right time and tending the machine in the right way. Sometimes, perhaps, carrying on for years with a machine we do not very well understand and do not enjoy; because it needs doing, and no one else is available. Or accepting the situation quite quietly, when a job we felt that we were managing excellently is taken away. Taking responsibility if we are called to it, or just bringing the workers their dinner, cleaning and sharpening the tools. All self-willed choices and obstinacy drained out of what we thought to be our work; so that it becomes more and more God's work in us.

I go back to the one perfect summary of man's Godward life and call—the Lord's Prayer. Consider how dynamic and purposive is its character. Thy Will be *done*—Thy Kingdom *come*! There is energy, drive, purpose in those words; an intensity of desire for the coming of perfection into life. Not the limp resignation that lies devoutly in the road and waits for the steam roller; but a total concentration on the total interests of God, which must be expressed in action. It is useless to utter fervent petitions for that Kingdom to be established and that Will be done, unless we are willing to do something about it ourselves. As we walk through London we know very well that we are not walking through the capital of the Kingdom of Heaven. Yet we might be, if the conviction and action of every Christian in London were set without any con-

ditions or any reluctance towards this end; if there were perfect consistency, whatever it cost—and it is certain that the cost would not be small—between our spiritual ideals and our social and political acts.

We are the agents of the Creative Spirit in this world. Real advance in the spiritual life, then, means accepting this vocation with all it involves. Not merely turning over the pages of an engineering magazine and enjoying the pictures, but putting on overalls and getting on with the job. The real spiritual life must be horizontal as well as vertical; spread more and more as well as aspire more and more. It must be larger, fuller, richer, more generous in its interests than the natural life alone can ever be; must invade and transform all homely activities and practical things. For it means an offering of life to the Father of life, to whom it belongs; a willingness—an eager willingness—to take our small place in the vast operations of His Spirit, instead of trying to run a poky little business on our own.

So now we come back to this ordinary mixed life of every day, in which we find ourselves—the life of house and work, tube and tram, newspaper and cinema, with its tangle of problems and suggestions and demands—and consider what we are to do about that; how, within its homely limitations, we can co-operate with the Will. It is far easier, though not very easy, to develop and preserve a spiritual outlook on life, than it is to make our everyday action harmonize with that spiritual outlook. That means trying to see things, persons and choices from the angle of eternity; and dealing with them as part of the material in which the Spirit works. This will be decisive for the way we behave as to our personal, social, and national obligations. It will decide the papers we read, the movements we support, the kind of administrators we vote for, our attitude to social and international justice. For though we may renounce the world for ourselves, refuse the

attempt to get anything out of it, we have to accept it as the sphere in which we are to co-operate with the Spirit, and try to do the Will. Therefore the prevalent notion that spirituality and politics have nothing to do with one another is the exact opposite of the truth. Once it is accepted in a realistic sense, the Spiritual Life has everything to do with politics. It means that certain convictions about God and the world become the moral and spiritual imperatives of our life; and this must be decisive for the way we choose to behave about that bit of the world over which we have been given a limited control.

The life of this planet, and especially its human life, is a life in which something has gone wrong, and badly wrong. Every time that we see an unhappy face, an unhealthy body, hear a bitter or despairing word, we are reminded of that. The occasional dazzling flashes of pure beauty, pure goodness, pure love which show us what God wants and what He is, only throw into more vivid relief the horror of cruelty, greed, oppression, hatred, ugliness; and also the mere muddle and stupidity which frustrate and bring suffering into life. Unless we put on blinkers, we can hardly avoid seeing all this; and unless we are warmly wrapped up in our own cosy ideas, and absorbed in our own interests, we surely cannot help feeling the sense of obligation, the shame of acquiescence, the call to do something about it. To say day by day "Thy Kingdom Come"—if these tremendous words really stand for a conviction and desire—does not mean "I quite hope that some day the Kingdom of God will be established, and peace and goodwill prevail. But at present I don't see how it is to be managed or what I can do about it." On the contrary, it means, or should mean, "Here am I! send me!"—active, costly collaboration with the Spirit in whom we believe.

Consider the story of the call of the young Isaiah. It is a story so well known that we easily take it for granted,

and so fail to realize it as one of the most magnificent and significant in the world; for it shows us the awakening of a human being to his true situation over against Reality, and the true object of his fugitive life. There are three stages in it. First, the sudden disclosure of the Divine Splendour; the mysterious and daunting beauty of Holiness, on which even the seraphs dare not look. The veil is lifted, and the Reality which is always there is revealed. And at once the young man sees, by contrast, his own dreadful imperfection. "Woe is me! for I am a man of unclean lips!" The vision of perfection, if it is genuine, always brings shame, penitence, and therefore purification. That is the second stage. What is the third? The faulty human creature, who yet possesses the amazing power of saying Yes or No to the Eternal God, is asked for his services, and instantly responds. "Who will go for us?" "Here am I! send me!" There the very essence of the spiritual life is gathered and presented in a point: first the vision of the Perfect, and the sense of imperfection and unworthiness over against the Perfect, and then because of the vision, and in spite of the imperfection, action in the interests of the Perfect—co-operation with God.

The action may be almost anything; from the ceaseless self-offering of the enclosed nun to the creation of beauty, or the clearance of slums. "Here am I! send me!" means going anyhow, anywhere, at any time. Not where the prospects are good, but where the need is great; not to the obviously suitable job, which I'm sure that I can do with distinction; but to do the difficult thing, or give the unpopular message, in the uncongenial place. "And Moses said, Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?" But he did it. Indeed, it is a peculiarity of the great spiritual personality that he or she constantly does in the teeth of circumstances what other people say cannot be done. He is driven by a total devotion which overcomes all personal timidity, and

gives a power unknown to those who are playing for their own hand or carving their own career.

If we consider the lives of the Saints, we see the strange paths along which they were driven by the Will to the accomplishment of their destiny: how unexpected and uncongenial were the ways in which they were used to bring the Kingdom in and do the Will of God: and how the heavenly Bread which they were given was given to make them strong for this destiny, not because it tasted nice. Great courage and initiative, the hardy endurance of privation and fatigue, the calm acceptance of unpopularity, misunderstanding and contempt, are at least as characteristic of them as any of the outward marks of piety. So too their inner life, which we are inclined to think of as a constant succession of spiritual delights, was often hard and painful. Willingly and perpetually, they prayed from within the Cross, shared the agony, darkness, loneliness of the Cross; and because of this, they shared in its saving power.

The Church is in the world to save the world. It is a tool of God for that purpose; not a comfortable religious club established in fine historical premises. Every one of its members is required, in one way or another, to co-operate with the Spirit in working for that great end: and much of this work will be done in secret and invisible ways. We are transmitters as well as receivers. Our contemplation and our action, our humble self-opening to God, keeping ourselves sensitive to His music and light, and our generous self-opening to our fellow creatures, keeping ourselves sensitive to their needs, ought to form one life; mediating between God and His world, and bringing the saving power of the Eternal into time. We are far from realizing all that human spirits can do for one another on spiritual levels if they will pay the price; how truly and really our souls interpenetrate, and how impossible and un-Christian it is to "keep ourselves to ourselves." When

St. Catherine of Siena used to say to the sinners who came to her: "Have no fear, I will take the burden of your sins," she made a practical promise, which she fulfilled literally and at her own great cost. She could do this because she was totally self-given to the purposes of the Spirit, was possessed by the Divine passion of saving love, and so had taken her place in the great army of rescuing souls.

That army continues in being, and the call to serve in its ranks would be more frequent and effective if we believed in it a little more: believed in it so much that we were willing to give time and strength to it, and did not draw back when we found that we had to suffer for it. "You will never do much for people, except by suffering for them," said the Abbé Huvelin. In the world of the Spirit that is supremely true. Again and again in the saints we see this saving action of love; but never apart from pain and self-oblation. Real intercession is a form of sacrifice; and sacrifice always costs something, always means suffering, even though the most deeply satisfying joy of which we are capable is mingled with its pain. The thoughts of God are very deep. Bit by bit He moulds us to His image, by giving to us some of His saving power, His redemptive love, and asking our co-operation. From time to time it is our privilege to meet these redemptive souls. They are always people, of course, who love God much, and—as St. Thomas says about Charity—love other people with the same love as that with which they love God; a love which is not satisfied unless it is expressed in sacrifice. When they find someone struggling with temptation, or persisting in wrong-doing, or placed in great spiritual danger, they are moved to a passionate and unconditional self-offering on that person's behalf. If the offering is accepted and the prayer is effective, it means much suffering for the redeeming soul; and presently it appears that the situation has been changed, the temptation has been mastered, the wrongdoing has ceased. When we find ourselves in the

presence of such facts as these we are awed and silenced; and our own petty notions of what the spiritual life of man may be and do are purified and enlarged. Cause and effect, perhaps, may not be visible on the surface. But below the surface, there has been a costly victory of love.

We come down from these heights to consider what this complete self-giving to the Spirit can mean in our own quite ordinary lives. St. John of the Cross says that every quality or virtue which that Spirit really produces in men's souls has three distinguishing characters—as it were a threefold National Mark—Tranquillity, Gentleness, Strength. All our action—and now we are thinking specially of action—must be peaceful, gentle and strong. That suggests, doesn't it? an immense depth, and an invulnerable steadiness as the soul's abiding temper; a depth and a steadiness which come from the fact that our small action is now part of the total action of God, whose Spirit, as another saint has said, "Works always in tranquillity." Fuss and feverishness, anxiety, intensity, intolerance, instability, pessimism and wobble, and every kind of hurry and worry—these, even on the highest levels, are signs of the self-made and self-acting soul; the spiritual parvenu. The saints are never like that. They share the quiet and noble qualities of the great family to which they belong: the family of the Sons of God.

If, then, we desire a simple test of the quality of our spiritual life, a consideration of the tranquillity, gentleness and strength with which we deal with the circumstances of our outward life will serve us better than anything that is based on the loftiness of our religious notions, or fervour of our religious feelings. It is a test that can be applied anywhere and at any time. Tranquillity, gentleness and strength, carrying us through the changes of weather, the ups and downs of the route, the varied surface of the road; the inequalities of family life, emotional and professional disappointments, the sudden intervention of bad fortune

or bad health, the rising and falling of our religious temperature. This is the threefold imprint of the Spirit on the souls surrendered to His great action.

We see that plainly in the Saints; in the quiet steadiness of spirit with which they meet the vicissitudes and sufferings of their lives. They know that these small and changing lives, about which we are often so troubled, are part of a greater mystery; the life that is related to God and known by God. They know, that is, that they, and all the other souls they love so much, have their abiding place in Eternity; and there the meaning of everything which they do and bear is understood. So all their action comes from this centre; and whether it is small or great, heroic or very homely, does not matter to them much. It is a tranquil expression of obedience and devotedness. As Ornan the Jebusite turned his threshing floor into an altar, they know how to take up and turn to the purposes of the Spirit the whole of life as it comes to them from God's Hand. St. Bernard and St. Francis discard all outward possessions, all the grace and beauty of life, and accept poverty and hardship; and through their renunciation a greater wealth and a more exquisite beauty is given the world. St. Catherine of Genoa leaves her ecstasy to get the hospital accounts exactly right; Elizabeth Fry goes to Newgate, Mary Slessor to the jungle, and Elizabeth Leseur accepts a restricted home life; all in the same royal service.

And we see that all these contrasted forms of action are accepted and performed quietly, humbly and steadily; without reflections about the superior quality of other people's opportunities, or the superior attraction of other people's jobs. It is here that we recognize their real character; as various expressions in action of one life, based on one conviction and desire. Thus there is no tendency to snatch another person's work, or dodge dull bits of their own; no cheapening sense of hurry, or nervous anxiety about success. The action of those whose lives are given

to the Spirit has in it something of the leisure of Eternity; and because of this, they achieve far more than those whose lives are enslaved by the rush and hurry, the unceasing tick-tick of the world. In the spiritual life it is very important to get our timing right. Otherwise we tend to forget that God, who is greater than our heart, is greater than our job too. It is only when we have learnt all that this means that we possess the key to the Kingdom of Heaven.

We have considered that co-operation with the Spirit's action which is to balance our communion with God, as a giving of ourselves to His service, doing some of His work in the world. But there is another and a deeper side: the hidden action of each soul called by God, the effort and struggle of the interior life—what *we* have to do in response to the Love which is drawing us out of darkness into His great light. Even that mysterious communion with God in which we seek, and offer ourselves to, that which we love—in spite of the deep peace it brings—is not without the pain and tension which must be felt by imperfect human creatures, when they contemplate and stretch towards a beauty and perfection which they cannot reach. Still more when it comes to the deeper action, the more entire self-giving, the secret transformation to which that vision of perfection calls us; and the sacrifice, struggle and effort which, sooner or later, this transformation must involve. The Perfection at which the awakened soul gazes is a magnet, drawing him towards itself. It means effort, faithfulness, courage, and sometimes grim encounters if he is to respond to that attraction, and move towards it along the narrow track which leads up and out from the dark valleys of the mind.

I think as I write this of Dürer's wonderful drawing of the Knight, Death and the Devil: the Knight of the Spirit on his strong and well-kept horse—human nature, treated as it ought to be, and used as it ought to be—riding up a dark rocky defile. Beside him travels Death, a horrible,

doddering figure of decay, saying, "All things perish—time is passing—we are all getting older—is this effort really worth while?" On his flank is a yet more hideous fellow pilgrim; the ugly, perverse, violent element of our mixed human nature, all our animal part, our evil impulses, nagging at him too. In one way or another, we all hear those two voices from time to time; with their discouragements and sneers, their unworthy invitations, their cynical comments and vile suggestions. "Don't forget me, I am your future," says Death. "Don't forget me," says animal man, "I am your undying past." But the Knight of the Spirit does not look at them. He has had his hand-to-hand struggle farther back; and on his lance is impaled the horrid creature, his own special devil, which he has slain. Now he is absorbed in the contemplation of something beyond the picture, something far more real than the nightmarish landscape through which he must travel; and because of that, he rides steadily forth from that lower world and its fantasies to the Eternal World and its realities. He looks at that which he loves, not at that which he hates, and so he goes safely out of the defile into the open; where he will join the great army of God. There we see the spiritual life as humanity is called to live it; based on the deep conviction that the Good, the Holy, is the Real, and the only thing that matters, fed and supported by the steadfast contemplation of the Holy and the Real—which is also the Beautiful and the Sane—and expressed in deliberate willed movements towards it, a sturdy faithful refusal to look at that which distracts us from it. Always looking the same way, and always moving the same way: in spite of obstacles, discouragements, mockery and fatigue. "Thou hast made us for thyself, and our hearts find no rest save in thee." But we must be willing to undertake the journey, whatever it may cost.

MADE AND PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN
FOR HODDER AND STOUGHTON LIMITED
BY NORTHUMBERLAND PRESS LIMITED
GATESHEAD ON TYNE

T 79

41583

BV Christmas, Frederick Ernest, comp.
215 Hear my prayer; a book to help you pray.
C56 London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1938.
509p. 19cm.

"The publishers are much indebted to the
Reverend F.E. Christmas, who has prepared and
edited this book."

1. Prayer. I. Title.

A9776

CCSC/ehw

